

# SOVIET LITERATURE

*Monthly*

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GALINA NI KOLAYEVA

## *Battle Along the Road*

*This is a novel which has caused considerable discussion in literary circles.*

*It opens in Moscow with a night in March 1953, the first night after Stalin's death. Among the millions out in the streets we meet the two main characters—Valgan, director of a tractor works in the Urals, and Bakhirev, the new chief engineer there.*

*Bakhirev knew that the factory to which he had just been appointed had recently started making a new tractor model without stopping production, and at the same time increased its programme. But when he came to the Urals and actually began work he discovered a number of important organizational defects; he also found that the factory coped with the programme by means of more and more intensive effort on the part of the workers, instead of a steady introduction of technical improvements. When Valgan and a group of men at the factory planned to try for a Stalin Prize, Bakhirev opposed it, because he believed there were serious defects in the calculations and design of the new tractor, causing the counterbalances to tear loose from the crankshaft.*

*Valgan decided to get rid of the troublesome chief engineer; the man was too independent in his way of thinking and acting. Meanwhile, Bakhirev drew up a plan for reorganizing production along more efficient lines. The director had to go to Moscow and Bakhirev took advantage of his absence to start putting his plan into effect.*



Naturally, there was a temporary fall in production in shops where the shift-over to new ways was in process. Valgan on his return was infuriated by Bakhirev's "high-handed" action and wanted not only to get rid of him, but to give him a lesson. At a meeting of the tractor works' Party members and managerial staff, Valgan and his adherents (who included Blikin, first secretary of the regional Party committee) hoped to make mince-meat of Bakhirev.

The meeting, however, did not go the way Valgan expected. The workers had realized that Bakhirev was right and in spite of certain mistakes on his part, they supported him. The Party organizer sent by the Central Committee to the factory, Chubasov, realized the importance of the workers' attitude; so did the second secretary of the regional committee, Grinin. So Valgan's plan failed for this time; but he did not give it up.

Bakhirev, wishing to see the defective tractors in action, went to the nearest machine and tractor station and there found confirmation of his opinion that the cause of trouble was a mistake in engineering calculations. On his return he began working on a new design, together with a young designer called Zyablikov and the engineer Roslavlev.

Soon after this, an order came from the Ministry dismissing Bakhirev from his position of chief engineer "for disorganization of work." Valgan was triumphant. However, contrary to his expectation, Bakhirev remained at the factory, accepting the position of shift engineer, a humiliating demotion.

In this difficult period his personal life too became complicated by his love for Tina Karamysh, a technologist at the factory. She returned his love, but both he and she were married.

The further development of these conflicts is contained in the concluding part of the novel, which we here offer to our readers.

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The day came when Bakhirev entered the works for the first time as shift engineer. He had not realized that it would be such an ordeal. But when the time came to mingle with those who only yesterday had known him as chief engineer, who had seen his defeat and disgrace, and many of whom believed he had only got his deserts, he felt as though he were on the way to his own execution, and had to force himself to step firmly, calmly. Who and what am I in their eyes, he thought. I'm what they saw on that caricature—a shaggy hippopotamus with counterbalances flying like cupids over my head and a heap of tractor scrap looming up behind my back. He felt as though he dragged that thousand-ton load of mutilated metal after him.

For the first time he would enter the works by the main gate instead of the entrance for the management. And he was out of luck. Just as he came to it, two cars drove up. Valgan emerged from the first, and from the second—Ukhanov, now temporarily filling the post of chief engineer. They both ran part way up the broad steps, and they both turned round. . . . Go slow, Bakhirev told himself, don't hurry. A steady, even pace. Left, right, left, right. Chin up.

"Come at four sharp," Ukhanov called back to the chauffeur, and raised his supple hand with four fingers outspread. "Four, you understand? You can get me to the city Party committee in half an hour, can't you?"



"No good, this sand they've spread." That was Valgan's velvety baritone. The director was looking at the flower-beds in front of the factory grounds. "I said they ought to get another kind. This grey stuff doesn't look like anything."

They stood on the top step as Bakhirev passed. It was strange to hear them talking about these ordinary things—a meeting at the city committee, the sand on the path. Nothing had changed, except that he was out of it all. If a dead man could hear and feel, he might have exactly the same sensation of hurt bewilderment at his own non-existence.

Left, right, left, right—he sternly controlled feet that wanted to break into a run.

Curious glances met him everywhere, but he did not raise his eyes. He held out his pass to the watchman without looking at him and went into the factory yard. Another stroke of bad luck—Malyutin. Malyutin hurried past without a glance or a word. Bakhirev noted it with a wry smile. Malyutin would not even condescend to gloat.

A voice behind him made him turn.

"Dmitri Alexeyevich, just a minute!" Vasili Vasilyevich, a foundry foreman, was hurrying after him. The old man said "good morning" as though this were any morning, and continued worriedly, "You remember how we thought of placing the second sandblast—will that be all right, what do you say? If we're thinking just of the present, it couldn't be better, but if some day we're going to have a sandblast line, then I've got another idea."

Didn't he know, or what?

"I'm not chief engineer now, Vasili Vasilyevich," said Bakhirev.

"I'm not asking you as chief, but as a man who knows. We started it together. . . . Maybe you could look into the shop?"

"That would be a bit awkward, I'm afraid."

"Eh, Dmitri Alexeyevich, it's awkward to pull your trousers on over your head. But this—! You didn't stop here because it was so fine and easy. It was because of the work. That's how we look at it, anyway. And if so, then that's the way you must act."

This friendly reproach brought Bakhirev up short. He looked into the old man's face with its kindly lines. To think he had once taken it for the face of a thief! He ought to be kicked!

"I'll ring you up," he said with difficulty. "After work."

He went to the engine shop. He must report to his new chief, Roslavlev. He remembered the first time he had entered Roslavlev's office; the rough, red-faced man had not even turned his head, had barely twitched a bristly brow in reply to the chief engineer's greeting. Now he was to enter it, no longer chief engineer, but a man disgraced, mercifully permitted to remain as shift engineer.

Through the closed door he heard Roslavlev's roar.

A good man, thought Bakhirev, but hard and rough, demanding, without any subtlety of understanding. How'll we get on now?

He opened the door.





*Galina Nikolayeva, a schoolmaster's daughter, was born in 1914 in an out-of-the-way village of Tomsk region.*

*After graduating from the Medical Institute in 1935 she worked in the pharmacological department of a research institute. When war broke out she suspended work on her thesis and left for the front. She served as doctor on a hospital transport-ship and during the battle of Stalingrad, in 1942, she helped evacuate the wounded from that heroic city. During one of the runs she was dangerously shellshocked, but as soon as she was convalescent she returned to her duties, working at hospitals in the North Caucasus until 1945.*

*Here she wrote her first verses, later to be published in the Moscow magazine Zna-*

The room was full of people. Roslavlev was seated at his table, his face suffused, giving somebody a dressing down. When he saw Bakhirev he broke off short, blinked and rose to greet him.

"Come in, Dmitri Alexeyevich. Sit down. We're just talking about the sixspindle job."

As he spoke he moved his chair towards Bakhirev and sat down on the edge of the table. When Valgan came to the shop he usually seated himself in the manager's place, but Bakhirev as chief engineer had not been accustomed to doing this. Touched by Roslavlev's gesture, not sure how to respond, he sat down awkwardly.

"There's a suggestion," the shop manager continued, "to change the singlespindle head for one with six spindles, like *this*, or perhaps like *this*..." He sketched plans and Bakhirev realized that Roslavlev was giving him time to find himself, quietly and tactfully helping him to enter his new sphere.

"It seems to me the second plan's better," said Bakhirev in a low voice.

"Well, lads," Roslavlev said decisively to the workers, "Dmitri Alexeyevich finds the second plan better, so we'll do as he advises."

Again his first visit to that room flashed through Bakhirev's mind. "If you think it's right, then go ahead and do it," Roslavlev had cut him short.

Bakhirev was not particularly emotional, but now he badly wanted to embrace, to hug that red-faced, bristly-browed giant with the lion's roar.

It was just a routine shop meeting, but every word spoken both by Roslavlev and the others tacitly stressed their respect for him; he could feel that they were easing him through this difficult hour with silent understanding.

The meeting ended, and Bakhirev and Roslavlev remained in the room alone.

"I've arranged for you to sit here," said Roslavlev, and Bakhirev, turning round, saw



a table in the corner which had not been there before. Then he was called to the telephone.

"Dmitri Alexeyevich?" It was Sagurov. "We're worried about the sandblast. We want your advice. When can you look in?"

"But I'm not chief engineer now."

"Everything progressive is linked with you. As far as that's concerned, you're the chief of chiefs for us."

Never before had Sagurov spoken such flattering words in such a friendly voice. Flattery? But why should he flatter a man removed from his position, disgraced?

Bakhirev had barely put down the receiver when an engineer rang up from the sintered hard alloys shop.

"Dmitri Alexeyevich? Been hunting for you everywhere. The powder they've sent is very low grade. I need your advice."

The prosaic words about powder accorded ill with the warmth that rang in the voice. Putting down the receiver, Bakhirev met Roslavlev's smiling look.

"You see!" said the manager, pleased and almost triumphant. "It takes more than the name to make a chief engineer. It takes prestige."

At nine exactly Chubasov rang up.

"How're you getting on there? Has the manager treated you properly? . . . Even a special table, eh? Tell him everything's got to be first-class. After the shift I'll be coming round to take a look."

The telephone was never quiet. Zyablikov's youthful bass breaking into a falsetto announced, "We can reduce the lever-arm in the counterbalance fixture a bit more. I've sketched it out. When can I bring it to you, Dmitri Alexeyevich?"

The words were of counterbalances and lever-arms, but the voice spoke of other things. And Bakhirev answered again, but with a feeling that was now both bitter and sweet, "I'm not chief engineer any more."

When Zyablikov hung up, Bakhirev turned a bewildered look on Roslavlev. "I don't understand—why do they all keep ringing me up about things?"

"Blockhead!" snapped Roslavlev. "It certainly is a waste of time talking to you like that if you haven't that much sense. Just get one thing into your head. Before all this happened, it wasn't everybody that knew you the way I did, for instance. But now you've shown what you've got in you. People aren't

mya. In 1945] the short story The Death of a Commander appeared in print; this is the concluding story of a war-time series.

From 1947 until 1949 Galina Nikolayeva, as correspondent for the Literaturnaya Gazeta, was a frequent visitor at collective farms, and she turned these trips to good account by collecting material for a book she was working on.

Her novel Harvest was published in 1950. This work enjoys great popularity and has been translated into many foreign languages.

The Newcomer came out in 1955, and Battle Along the Road, the concluding part of which we are publishing in this issue, in 1957.



fools, they know well enough it would have been easier for you to go away somewhere else. You could have found a better job than shift engineer, that's certain. A dog runs away from the place where he's mucked, but you didn't run. You stopped right here. You'd take whatever was coming to you, so long as you could stay on. Well, that means you think something of the factory, and the work we're doing. And it means something else—either you feel you're right, or else you honestly want to make up for your mistake. And that's how they understand it. They think the more of you for it. They're backing you. After all, they're decent people!"

Bakhirev gave Roslavlev's iron shoulder a hard grip.

"Now tell me, Dmitri, what else you need here. You're a sort of illegal chief engineer and this is your unofficial headquarters. Come on, present your demands," Roslavlev ended and laughed deep in his throat as he paced up and down, pretending to be thoroughly enjoying the new situation.

But Bakhirev, shaken to the core, could only look at him, his heart in his eyes.

"Well, what about it, Dmitri?" said Roslavlev, embarrassed by that look. "After all, it's only for a time. We know that. But I'm quite serious—tell me what you need from me to help along the good work."

"But I'm not going to spend all my time sitting in your office," smiled Bakhirev. "Don't forget, I'm shift engineer."

"Oh, well," growled Roslavlev, "anyway, you're the right stuff."

He left the office. Bakhirev, deeply moved, stood by the window trying to absorb all the experiences of that morning. Tractors crawled out of the assembly shop. He remembered his first day at the works, when he had stood there—alone, gloomy, talking to the tractor. What an unpleasant person he had been, morose and conceited. And what a lie it was, the idea of standing alone. One who fights staunchly, fights for something that affects the public welfare, will never be left to stand alone. On the contrary. He is the only one who really knows what friendship means. Even at the old factory where he had worked half his life, he had never felt as he did today the strength and meaning of a laconic comradeship reminiscent of the comradeship of soldiers at the front. But that was natural enough. There, he had never had to put up a real fight.

Refreshed, with mounting spirits, he made his way to the shop. There, he knew, another challenge faced him, he must become a model shift engineer.

That was more difficult than he had expected.

The deficiencies of the repair services, which he had known before only in theory, now bore down with their whole weight on his oily, sooty shoulders. When machine tools and conveyors stopped at the most awkward moments and mechanics spent hours on repairs, he crawled with them under the floor or under machines, and worked in cramped positions, cursing furiously, while the dirty sweat trickled down his face. But if he managed to repair a machine better than the mechanics, or his shift made a better showing than the others, he felt a thrill of real delight, and knew, too, that many more such thrills came to the shift engineer than to the chief engineer.



Katya's mind stood still with shock and bewilderment when her husband, demoted and disgraced, came home looking delighted with life and talked about a machine repaired as though it were some amazing event. He earned less than he had ever earned before. He took no overtime or auxiliary work because he spent all his spare time in the experimental shop.

To all intents and purposes, Valgan had stopped the testing of the counter-balances. "I haven't any objections to work continuing on them when there's nothing else to do," he said and then piled so much work on the testing engineers that they had hardly time to breathe.

Bakhirev's difficulties were increased by the fact that he was busy during the evenings and nights, and in the daytime the testing stands were usually occupied. He had to snatch any time he could, and in most cases to prepare, watch and note the results of tests lasting many hours himself. He was at the factory day and night.

Katya panicked alone. She could not go out to work, she had not the training, the ability or the physical strength. She let her maid go but found she could not cope with the housekeeping and the children, who went to different schools at different times, who were always in a hurry, always quarrelling, always busy with something they thought most terribly urgent. "Dmitri, I simply can't do anything with them," she wailed.

Usually he tried patiently to comfort her, but one day he exploded with "What can you do, anyway? Is there anything at all you *are* capable of doing, Katya?"

She burst into tears and he tried to calm her.

"Just stick it out for two or three months. I'll finish the tests and then little by little everything'll fall into place."

But it was impossible to comfort her. Both of them felt that she too was undergoing a test, and not standing up to it.

All the time he longed for Tina, for her cool gaiety and the forgetfulness of all else that he found in the moments when he was close to her.

"Tell me what you've been doing," she said.

"Squirming about under a machine. Devil take that former chief engineer! Spent a whole year keeping a chair warm and couldn't get the repair service working decently."

Tina laughed. "I can see half a year as shift engineer's what is needed to make you a real good chief."

"Maybe you're right," he conceded. "I wrestled with that balancing machine half the day, but I got it adjusted. And you can't think how good it feels! It's best to be a plain worker, after all. Your own hands, your own head, your own machine, and answer for your own work. To put it in a nutshell—the working class!"

"And when did you have dinner, you working class?"

He was hungry, but he would not admit it. He could not eat the stuffed buns she brought him; his children were forgetting the taste of buns.

By some means known only to herself she quickly took a spot out of his shirt. He always liked efficiency, and now he asked, "How is it you can do all these things, Tina? You had that spot out in two minutes, and your buns look something special."

"What's wonderful about that? I was a housewife for years."

The more difficult things were for him, the sharper became his thirst for happiness and for the essence of all happiness for him—Tina.

September was wonderful. In warm sunny days alternating with rain, summer died in glory. Trees became a mass of gold shot with crimson, but lost none of their leaves. Golden birches rustled with the thick foliage of spring. Cherry leaves were redder than the berries had been, yet not a single one left its stem. Oaks seemed carved in bronze. Only the tender maples dropped their leaves, and even this seemed to be less in obedience to the dying summer than to a wish to adorn the earth.

"Just look at it," Tina marvelled. "The freshness of spring and the colours of autumn!"

But then came the first frost, and for two days the air was filled with whirling colour.

Now the fir-trees which had been modestly hidden amidst the thick foliage seemed to advance and stretch out their branches to receive and hold the last falling gold of the birches. Then the wild wind tore it from them too. Leaves which such a short time ago had been quiet, light flakes rustled and scratched over the ground as though seeking refuge, darkening day by day, curling up with the cold like small animals, their slender spines projecting.

The earth became chill and grey and there was hoar frost in the mornings, as though somebody had strewn salt thickly on the earth to preserve it and make it hold the vital force that would burst out again in the spring.

With the coming of autumn, the number of counterbalances tearing loose dropped sharply, but still the tractor casualties lived on in Bakhirev's memory.

"The tractors are in for overhauling. When work starts in the spring the counterbalances will start flying off again," Bakhirev insisted firmly at Valgan's next conference.

"That's not the important point." Valgan brushed the argument aside. "Thousands of tractors are working, and they'll be working all the winter. Those counterbalances which suffered from technological faults have already given way. But those made in accordance with accepted technology will stand the strain. And then you'll see for yourself what you were doing when you wanted to stop production."

Counterbalance breakages became comparatively rare, and calmness returned to the works. It was becoming increasingly clear that Valgan had been right. But Chubasov still kept an eye on Bakhirev's tests. He became thin and haggard, and had little to say. One day Roslavlev spoke of him to Bakhirev.



"I'm sorry for that young fellow. They're digging the ground from under his feet. The Party regional committee—it was Blikin insisted on it—blamed him for the 'collapse of mass Party work' and charged him with neglecting Party questions for technical ones."

"But why on earth—?" asked Bakhirev.

"Mass Party work isn't like a tractor. There are no tests to say whether it's collapsing or not. If the regional committee says it's in a bad way, then try to prove it isn't! Don't you know why they're after him?"

"Why?"

"Because of you."

Because of him? Roslavlev's words rang in Bakhirev's mind after he had gone. He knew the support Chubasov was giving him, day by day, and was grateful to his friend. But Roslavlev's words had thrown a new light on the situation. Chubasov had not only helped him, but had himself paid for that help.

Bakhirev thought back to many events of that autumn and put them together. He remembered how the Communists of the engine shop at a closed Party meeting had unanimously acknowledged the faultless technology of the counter-balance fixings. He remembered how friendly the investigator had been when he sent for him afterwards. He remembered the growing friction between Chubasov and Blikin and the interest the Central Party Committee had taken in the testing of the new design. And he remembered the expressionless face of Valgan, his coolness to Chubasov.

Pondering over much that had been thrust into the background by urgent, difficult work and his love of Tina, Bakhirev realized that Chubasov had taken the main blow on himself so that he, Bakhirev, could have a breathing space to gather strength for the next attack.

## *THE FIRST SNOW*

However much snow falls in the winter, it'll never be like this again, thought Seryozha. During the night the world had turned white, with faint blue shadows.

Only yesterday sticky mud had squelched on the roads, now the virgin snow gleamed. A luminous dawn seemed to rise from it, and the street lamps became patches of yellow, losing their glow. The renewed world lay quiet and lovely. Fluffy snow-flakes circled slowly in the air and settled carefully. Tiny snow-stars sparkled on rosy, smiling faces.

"The first snow, the first day, the first snow," Seryozha repeated in time with his walking feet. The first day of his work on chill casting coincided with the first snow. The previous day he had made a trial—cast and finished five patterns. The inspector had passed them all. In the evening he had cast and prepared another twenty-four.

The untouched snow made him think of them—they had been just as pure and light, gleaming softly in the dusk.

How could this be compared with anything he had done before? Chill casting was the beginning of great changes in the whole shop.

All doubts and hesitations were left behind, he had no more thought for them, any more than for the mud which had soiled the pavement the day before. This day held only the first snow and the first great achievement—a wonderful, unclouded day.

The path ended with a pile of scrap concealed under the snow. In the distance, in the corner of the great yard, stood the pattern shop—for others, a rather ugly building, but for Seryozha both home and destiny.

The snow began falling thickly. Someone called him from behind.

"Seryozha! Sugrobin!" It was his pals Kondrat and Sinenky.

"Well, how's things?" asked Sinenky. "Mefodich says you made five, and good 'uns, he says."

"Like that," and Seryozha pointed at the snow. "Light, clean, seem to shine of themselves."

"Where are they?"

"In the non-ferrous foundry."

They crossed the open space to the shop.

Twenty-four castings lay by the wall. Sinenky squatted down by them and whistled softly. His knowledgeable fingers moved over surfaces and fillets while his humorous eyes narrowed in appraisal. Then he let out a short laugh.

"So you've pulled it off. Good for you, Sugrobin! So it's not Don Quixote you are, it's Don—Don—Lord Knows What! Left nothing for us to do. The chill casting's done it all."

Kondrat weighed the casting in his hand.

"How much?"

"Four and a half kilograms."

"Instead of thirteen? Stow it!"

"Light as a feather," laughed Sinenky.

"Can you manage them in four days?" asked Kondrat.

"In one! I'll do it today!"

"Now that's something," said Sinenky admiringly. "It's over a month's quota. Are you sure, Seryozha?"

"You'll see. Let's get them transported over."

"We can carry them across ourselves. Light as feathers!"

They picked up the castings and hurried to the pattern shop. Sinenky, in front, looked back and urged them on.

"Great chaps like you, and can't keep up with a little 'un! Hurry up, Seryozha. I can't wait."

I was wrong to get mad at them, thought Seryozha. Anything can happen between pals. And they are pals, real pals, when you get down to it.



A sense of happiness shared covered all dissension as the fresh snow covered mud and rubbish with pure, untouched white.

Tina Borisovna Karamysh had not seen Seryozha for some days and made a point of coming an hour early so as to look into the pattern shop. But neither Seryozha nor his friends were there.

"How's it going with Sugrobin?" she asked Gurov.

"Still fussing," he answered indifferently.

As she left the shop, Tina saw the three approaching across the snow, in single file, loaded with castings. They were obviously having some difficulty with their loads, but their faces, rosy and damp with snow, looked so gay that she ran to meet them.

"Well? How's it going, lads?"

"Seryozha's going to set a record! Over a month's quota in a single day!" cried Sinenky and turned incautiously.

Some castings slipped down. He stopped, Kondrat bumped into him and dropped his whole load. Seryozha burst out laughing and dropped half of his too. Then they all squatted down to gather up the aluminium castings from the snow.

"In a single day? Right away at once?" Tina pelted him with questions. "Have you tried it out?"

"Yes, I've had a try, Tina Borisovna," Seryozha answered. "Load me up with a couple more of those."

"When on earth did you manage it?" Tina laid two castings just under Seryozha's chin.

"They're cold," he laughed, holding them down with his cheek, and added, "turned 'em out yesterday evening."

The other two had already got up and were walking on with their loads. Tina fell into step with Seryozha.

"And what about the technical inspection? You're sure they'll pass it? You're sure you can do all that in one day?"

His cheek pressed down on the castings, he squinted up at Tina with a gay brown eye. "Yes, it's all worked out. Everything will be just right."

Tina hurried over to Gurov.

"There's going to be big doings in the shop today. Chill casting! Over a month's quota in a single day! Never been such a thing before. Why doesn't anybody know about it? We ought to have it in the factory paper."

Gurov's heavy lips seemed to part with difficulty. "First do the job. Then shout hurray. . . . We don't know how it'll turn out yet, and you start kicking up a shindy."

Without answering, Tina sat down opposite Gurov and with a gay, malicious glance into his narrow eyes, picked up the telephone.

"Employment department! What d'you think you're doing there? Our pattern shop's started going over to chill casting and you don't know a thing! Send time-keepers at once."

Before Gurov had time to grasp what was happening, she rang up the newspaper and the head metallurgist's office. This was when Gurov got his breath back.

"Where've you dropped from? We've got our own engineers here, stiff with 'em."

"That's exactly what I am—one of your very own engineers," laughed Tina and slipped out of the room. She wanted to see Seryozha at work, but it was nearly time for her own shift to begin. She ran over to the pattern shop for a moment. A crowd of workers surrounded Seryozha. The castings lay in a definite, previously planned order.

"Very little milling left to do now," Seryozha explained. "I'll put all the castings through the first operation, then I'll put the lot through the second and third."

Looking at his fixed, happy smile, his clear, concentrated eyes, Tina knew the thrill of happiness he must be experiencing.

Seryozha switched on his machine just as the whistle sounded. Foremen, workers from other shifts, time-keepers and people from the newspaper stood round about. The high-speed rotating cutters merged into a blur as they silently removed the metal, and a fountain of silvery chips poured down. The castings came in a steady stream. The machine answered every movement—it seemed to Seryozha as though it answered even his thought. He saw only the castings, but the sense of a wonderful, happy day was with him all the time. Freshness of thought and muscle. Movements exactly calculated. The approving eyes of the others. And outside the windows the young, white day. This was life. He took the first silvery milled pattern, and for a moment remembered the bird which had circled over the floating ice and flown away, evading his hand.

Now I've got it, he thought.

The news flew through the factory that a whole batch of models had been finished in half a working day. In the dinner hour people came to ask questions, to congratulate him, to offer a sandwich—but he did not want to answer, listen or eat, he wanted to get back to that rhythm. In spite of four hours of intensive work, his muscles were not tired. He was asked to stop on after the shift—the reporters and cinema photographers wanted him. He mumbled something, impatient for the moment when he could get back to his castings.

At the end of the first shift Ivushkin rang up Chubasov.

"Here's a fine kettle of fish in the pattern shop. . . . Sugrobin's gone and done it. He's putting out four and a half thousand. . . ."

He spoke in the awe-struck tone one uses in speaking of floods, tempests and other natural calamities. Chubasov did not catch all the words, but was startled by the tone. "Who's Sugrobin putting out?"

"All the percentages! He's doing four-and-a-half thousand per cent of the quota!"

"What? What's that? But that's crazy!"

"I thought so, too."



"But how? What's he using?"

"Chill casting. . . . What are we going to do now?"

"What are we going to do?" repeated Chubasov angrily. "You talk as if the roof had fallen in on your head. Four and a half! You're sure it's right? But what about quality?"

"Time-keepers have been there since morning. Technical inspection's stamped his patterns. What shall I do?"

"Go and congratulate him. Support him and get others using his method—if everything you say's right, that is. Why, there's never been anything like this in the works—what am I saying, the works? There's never been anything like it in these parts at all! Have you got a stop-press item ready? We'll have a short meeting between shifts."

When Chubasov entered the shop he found the passage-way crowded. Finished patterns lay neatly piled. Sugrobin's famous cupboard stood open, and cutters stood ready for use, in strict order.

Seryozha was absorbed in his work. He never raised his head, only his flushed forehead was visible. Patterns flew under the cutters one after the other, with that typical, abrupt metallic whine of the machine. With a touch on the button Seryozha halted it for a second, reached over to the cupboard without looking, picked up the cutter he needed, changed it in a second, and again came the abrupt sound of high-speed milling.

Every movement was planned, precise and efficient, and the people round him watched with the motionless, breathless absorption given to trapeze artists under the big top, or some amazing pirouette at the ballet. Somebody let out a sigh. Then Chubasov saw Sinenky.

"Why aren't you at work?"

"Seryozha's got me running round in circles. Wish I was in his shoes right now," Sinenky glanced over at his machine and shrugged. "Call it work! On that? That crock? Ought to be pensioned off."

Excitement gripped the whole shop, men exchanged looks, stopped their work and joined the crowd in the aisle. Only Kondrat kept stolidly on. From whistle to whistle all the outside world ceased to exist for him. He tried to push people away with his elbow, growling, "Keep off, can't you? Standing there gawking—! Let me get on with it. . . . What d'you think this is, a football match?"

Thick-lipped, sacklike Gurov followed Chubasov's beckoning finger out into the passage. His sharp, sagacious eyes gleamed as he said, "Well—he's landed one in the eye all right."

"Whose eye?"

"Why, ours, of course—again."

Chubasov smiled wryly.

"Well, you've said it."

"And what am I going to say at the meeting?"

"Why, are you going to speak?"

"I'm shop manager."

"Well, just say, 'He's landed us one in the eye,'" Chubasov advised grimly. After settling some details about the meeting, he rang up Valgan.

"You know what's happened today, Semyon Petrovich? Chill casting's coming into its own! Sugrobin turned out four thousand five hundred per cent!"

"Four hundred and fifty, you mean?"

"No, four thousand five hundred. We're having a meeting between shifts. The newsreel people are coming. Will you be there?"

Valgan paused, while his thoughts raced. Four and a half thousand! Any industrial manager would grin—fine quotas they set at that factory, he'd say. Don't know their job! He himself would be the first to laugh if it were any other place. To court publicity would mean, confessing low quotas and technical backwardness.

The situation was complicated by the fact that quotas, technical backwardness, chill casting and Sugrobin himself had all been points of conflict with Bakhirev. And lately Bakhirev had found a supporter in the second secretary of the regional Party committee—Grinin. Seryozha's chill-casting record would be just the kind of thing they wanted. And Valgan was sure they would not hesitate to use it. They would say, "Valgan put the brakes on. Valgan failed to understand." There'd be a whole song-and-dance on the theme of conservative director and progressive worker. Quotas and programmes would be raised. In short, to publicize Sugrobin's four-and-a-half thousand would mean preparing a rod for his own back.

All these things passed through his mind, but none passed his lips. Chubasov noticed only a rather long pause.

"You're in too much of a hurry with your meeting, stop-press and newsreel," came reprovingly from the telephone at last. "That's the way we spoil young workers. It's a mistake."

"We've already made a mistake about Sugrobin. Now we've got to put it right. It isn't the record he's set that's important, it's that Sugrobin has proved, thoroughly proved, the value and practicability, right here in our works, of progressive methods."

"But nobody's ever denied it."

"Not in words. But Sugrobin's opened the factory doors to chill casting. In all human decency, I've got to say thank you to the lad."

"All right, say it! But why the meeting? The Party's condemned the practice of demonstration record-making long ago. I am strongly against any meeting."

Chubasov said calmly:

"You come and see for yourself what's going on. The workers are coming here without any invitation. They're coming from other shops. Naturally, they're interested. And quite right, too. And it's a healthy interest. The workers know well enough that this isn't a demonstration record, it's the birth of a new, progressive technology. The meeting will begin in half an hour."



Yes—there would be a meeting, he could not stop it, Valgan realized that. But no newsreel, no reporters. That he could stop, and would. He rang up the film studio.

Seryozha finished the final milling operation and put the last, twenty-fourth tread pattern on the pile.

Gradually, painfully he straightened his stiff, numbed back, he took out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes, red and watering with the concentrated effort, then looked about him, a vague but happy look, as though he had just awakened.

The meeting was held on the empty space outside the pattern shop. The steps served as a speaker's stand. Gurov was one of the first to mount them.

"We have to welcome. . . ."

Seryozha wanted to laugh. Whether he wanted or not, he had to welcome. . . .

When Gurov said Seryozha had turned out four-and-a-half thousand per cent and earned eleven hundred roubles in one shift, there was a general gasp.

"That's something like!"

As Seryozha's eyes passed over the friendly faces, he started. A pair of eyes glared at him from behind a number of heads, with a look like the thrust of a knife. Yevstignei!

They had come together to the pattern shop a number of years previously, the puny, insignificant Seryozha and the swaggering, well-dressed Yevstignei, whose parents had been arrested not long before for black marketeering.

"I'll earn myself social standing. I've got to get into college," he told Seryozha.

However, he was soon expelled from the Comsomol for drinking and brawling; he went to another factory, and then got a prison sentence for theft. Thanks to an amnesty he never served his sentence but Yevstignei's past did not make managers eager to take him on, and he had finally landed in the iron casting foundry, where there was always a shortage of men. By that time Seryozha had become one of the best workers, his portrait was among those on the factory square. Yevstignei watched all he did with avid, resentful curiosity.

What had brought him here, Seryozha wondered—malice?

It was strange to think that on such a wonderful day malice could be living, breathing, close by. Seryozha turned away. A shaft of warmth came to him from a pair of wide eyes farther off. Dasha! Dasha had come!

This was what he had needed to make the day perfect. A heart to share his joy, wholly and selflessly. Up to that moment the meeting, the speakers, the challenge banner had all seemed like something far away, something that did not touch him. But Dasha's eyes told him, "All this—the people, the speeches, the snow—it's all for you, all because of you."

Her face, her hair seemed to shine with a light of their own. She had grown up, too. And how she looked at him!

Dasha, hidden in the crowd, could gaze her fill at that face which was the only one for her. It was sweet pain to see the clear, gay light in his brown eyes,

the smile on his lips, to watch the snow-flake settle on his eyebrow. When the meeting ended, Dasha joined some of the others at the pattern shop entrance. Yevstignei came up to her. For some time past she had noticed him following her around.

"They think we don't catch on to all this," he said. "A slick trick. They've fixed it so as to jack up the quotas. We know all about it, we're not kids. Quotas'll go up like rockets. The pattern-makers'll soon find themselves paying for that record, and through the nose!"

"That's a lie!" Dasha flared up. "Nobody'll pay. His chill casting method'll make the job easier. And you can ask anyone you like how Sugrobin works! He thought of that chill casting right back in the spring. Nobody's fixed up anything, he's got a good head and good hands and doesn't spare himself, that's all! And that's how he's done it. But you—all you can do is swill and lie, swill and lie!"

"Well, well, look at the kindergarten going up in the air!" Yevstignei marvelled. "So prim and prissy, butter wouldn't melt in your mouth, and now all of a sudden—! I've been watching you, wondering who's your boy friend—maybe it's Sugrobin? Eh?"

"He never even looks at me," said Dasha angrily. "What does he want with me?"

"Yes, you're right there. Why should he look at you? That Igoreva's more his style. He's always after her."

So it's true, thought Dasha despairingly. I always knew he'd no use for me. But she replied with spirit.

"Well, what if he is? None of your business who he goes about with. Better look at the way he works. And why do you keep following me? Leave me alone!"

Could Seryozha have heard, she thought, and with a sudden sixth sense she knew he had, he was there.

Seryozha came out of the door and went straight up to Yevstignei.

"What are you bothering this kid for? Get out!"

Yevstignei was alone; Seryozha's friends were behind him, among them the bear-like Kondrat.

"Nothing to keep me here!" Spitting to show how little he cared, Yevstignei turned and went.

"Call yourself a worker," Seryozha called after him. "Don't go, lads," he said to the others. "They're coming from the newsreel, they asked me to wait."

"Seryozha, will they film us with you?"

The girls were all round him, but Dasha never raised her eyes. Without looking up, she could still see his lips—those lips which had almost touched hers, and these hands which had once stroked her palm. Could it be true that he was running after Igoreva? No! But why not? After all, she was beautiful, and famous, and proud. . . .

Dasha always avoided meeting Seryozha, but she thought of him constantly; and with the alchemy of dreams he became handsome, quite grown up, the one person who filled her world. And now he was here—thinner, more serious,



shorter, but even better, like no one else in the world. He stood beside her, near and yet how far away; there was no one on earth she wanted more, it was impossible to imagine him alongside Igoreva. Suddenly she had the feeling he might hear her thoughts as he had heard her words, he might guess how she longed to look at him; she shuddered with shame and fright and ran from the entrance. She did not even take the path but cut straight across the untrodden snow, anxious only to get to the trees and hide from all eyes.

"Dasha!" It was his voice. "Where are you going, Dasha?"

A few steps had brought him to her side.

Her only thought was not to lose her head, not to make a fool of herself in front of him. She found the strength to stop, look up and ask quietly, "Yes—what is it, Seryozha?"

"You didn't congratulate me."

"But I did. Our whole shop congratulated you—that means me, too."

He looked at her face, pale and young. Its pallor seemed to have an inner gleam, like the virgin snow. A white flake lay on her black shawl. Dasha turned away. He laughed.

"The shop congratulated me—all right. But you—can't you even shake hands?"

She held out her hand without looking, her eyelids lowered. Her face was still, then her lips opened a little and her nostrils quivered. She was filled with fear, trust and a childlike helplessness.

"Dasha . . ." said Seryozha. He pitied her and rejoiced in his power over her. "Dasha—look at me."

Her eyes could not lie, she had good cause to hide them. For an instant she raised them to him—blue, frightened—and in that instant betrayed herself. And Seryozha knew.

She loves me! She loves me!

She dropped her head and turned to go. But Seryozha put out a hand and stopped her.

"Wait a minute, Dasha. . . . You wouldn't go to the pictures, you wouldn't go to the theatre. Maybe you'll come skating with me?"

Now she looked at him with that quiet self-respect which had surprised and attracted him before. She's quite different, he thought, not a child any longer. And yet she's still the same. Oh, I knew it, I knew she would be like this. But she's even better than I thought, better than I expected.

"I've no time for skating. I go to evening secondary school and to the advanced workers' school too. Good-bye, Seryozha." She quickened her steps, leaving footprints that were small and a little pigeon-toed, like a child's.

The combination of childish helplessness and womanly dignity was so touching that Seryozha stood still, his eyes following her.

What have I been thinking of? What have I waited for? She's here, beside me, walking, thinking, loving. And she might go away altogether for very pride. And leave only footprints behind.

He wanted to run after her, to stop her, to tell her everything at once, but she caught up with a group of women and joined them.

How good it all was! Although Seryozha could not have said exactly what was so good, what had suddenly happened. The morning had been good too. In the morning there had been the castings, and the bright new patterns, and the snow, and the other fellows, that was one thing, but this wonderful girl Dasha had been somewhere near, and still apart. Now, suddenly, Dasha was better than all and the centre of all, and everything—the snow and the cast patterns and his success—was only there for her.

So love comes suddenly too, like the snow, flashed through Seryozha's mind, and he stood looking at Dasha, marvelling. Girls had run after him, and often a strident voice, badly arranged hair or the wrong hat had been quite enough to put him off. But now—a cheap black shawl looked sweet, and an old, short coat still sweeter. And feet turned in a little like a child's went to his very heart. But why did she go away, Seryozha asked himself sadly. Others didn't love him but they ran after him. While she—how she looked at him . . . she loved him! But she ran away from him! Was that her nature? Was it pride? And he'd let her go! Should he run after her, try to talk her round? But she wouldn't give way. . . . She's turned you down, Seryozha! If she'd only look back! No, not she.

"Seryozha! Gurov's looking for you," Sinenky called.

Gurov was sitting in his office, crushing and kneading a piece of paper.

"Now look, Seryozha I've a bit of a nut to crack. Well, it's this way, you know yourself it's the very end of the month, and now you grab a thousand roubles all of a sudden. Where'll I get them? It'll mean over-spending the wage fund. The shop'll lose its bonus. The men'll grumble. Naturally. And all the rest of it. . . . Now look, let me spread that thousand over a few months."

"That's all right," Seryozha agreed easily. "So long as I get fit for the summer. My little brother Tolik ought to go to the Crimea."

"We'll manage it by the summer." Gurov let out a sigh of relief. "We'll fix it up by then—either here, or pay it into your savings bank account, it'll be all the same to you. Or better, even. And the men won't feel so sore. Because now we'll have to revise the quotas, whether we want to or not. And all because of you. The men won't like that, of course. And then to over-spend the fund too, and lose the bonus—and again because of you!"

It had never entered Seryozha's head to look at things from that point of view. New quotas, wage fund. Gurov was playing on the workers' dissatisfaction. But wasn't their dissatisfaction directed against Gurov himself?

"I've already agreed," he said quickly.

"And one more thing," said Gurov, encouraged. "The cinema people wanted to come. Well, they won't. So you needn't wait for them."

"It wasn't me that sent for them," said Seryozha, annoyed. "I said myself I've no time to bother with them. My time's valuable. But what do they think they're doing? First they pester me—wait for us, we're coming, then all of a sudden—never mind, they won't be here. What's it all about?"



"There's too much noise, too much fuss," said Gurov with didactic sternness. "It's out of place, all this hullabaloo."

A special cake awaited Seryozha at home.

"Well, Grandad, now do you think I'm worth something?" Seryozha asked.

Vasili Vasilyevich silently poured out a glass of wine from his own cherries.

Seryozha had brought one pattern home to show Tolik. "Here you are. You kept asking me what they were like, well, take a look. And this thing's got your health in it, what's more. I'll earn a summer in the Crimea for you. You'll go with Mum for three months."

Friends dropped in with congratulations, but by evening the strain of the day had its effect. Dizzy with work, success, congratulations and wine, Seryozha went into the back room he shared with his grandfather and got into bed. But as soon as his eyelids closed he saw again the young, light, gleaming snow, the light, gleaming castings and over all the proud, gentle face of Dasha.

Good, how good everything is, he thought, and remembered his promise to spend that evening with Igoreva. A month ago he had gone to her; he had kissed her because she expected it and because he wanted to feel himself a man. His first feeling was that of a disappointment experienced before. But later she had pressed her slender, knowledgeable body to his. After that he had spent the night with her a number of times. He was proud of being a man now, but angry with himself too, and sometimes disgusted with both himself and her. Should he go to her today? No. Her painted lips, her scent, her giggles had no place in that white, snowy day. Why had he ever started it, he thought. He'd nothing to blame himself for as far as she was concerned, he wasn't her first, and he hadn't gone after her, it was she who'd made the advances. A good thing, he thought, that he'd never promised her anything or talked about love. . . . But there was still a bad taste in his mouth at the thought of it all. Against whom had he offended, then? Himself? Or—Dasha? No, he was not guilty of anything, but the thought was unpleasant. Well then, he would not think about it. It was all past and gone!

He stretched out luxuriously in bed and again, half asleep, he saw before him the castings, and the white snow, and the small footprints on it. Suddenly he pictured himself bending a girl's head back—not Igoreva's, but Dasha's. His heart began to thud as though he had gazed into a great depth. He had never felt like that with Igoreva. There were no depths about her. And no time to look. . . . But Dasha? To take her hand would set his heart beating. And to look into her eyes as he had today. . . . He remembered how she had walked, how she had run from him—frightened, sweet, his own—leaving her footprints in the snow. His breath came fast with joy, he laid his hand on his heart and was surprised at the strength of its beat. Those prints in the snow. . . . She hadn't even learned to walk like a grown-up woman, but what pride, what firmness! She had a high ideal of life. She ran away from him. . . . But he'd catch her, all the same. Catch her!—he thought, the thread of his thought losing itself in sleep. What was it that was so splendid?—Yes, Dasha, the snow, the castings.

As Seryozha gradually drifted into sleep, Gurov was talking to Valgan over the telephone.

"What are we to do now, Semyon Petrovich? I got him to take today's thousand over several months. But what if he makes another tomorrow? The law says we've got to pay him the present rates for six months. They say Gurov's a diehard, they say Gurov's a stick-in-the-mud—but what am I supposed to do now, if he's going to make a thousand a day? Either records, or the wage fund!"

"Here, stop a minute," Valgan interrupted. "What are you getting into such a panic about?"

"I've got that Karamysh woman running about here. Says we ought to have started chill casting ourselves long ago, then we wouldn't be in this fix. Was I ever against it? But how was I to start when I'd no fund for it and no plans—nothing! And now I'm a diehard! Well, what's the diehard to do if Sugrobin starts making a thousand a day with these patterns?"

"And is Sugrobin tied to tread patterns?" Valgan asked calmly. "We've got a complicated order from the Ministry for cast equipment. Put Sugrobin on that. We do not intend to encourage money-grabbing propensities. You—" He broke off. Somebody was calling on the high-frequency line.

"The newspaper people are all up in arms here." It was Grinin's voice. "They say wonders have happened in the pattern shop, a young worker's introduced chill casting, and it's shot production up to something fantastic. This is important, and you're setting your face against any broad demonstration and publicity in general. What crazy idea's this?"

"I've got crazy ideas? Some people like making a fuss about nothing. Well, so a score of patterns have been made by chill casting. You can't treat it as an earth-shaking event just like that, without checking up. We'll spoil people that way. The Party's condemned demonstration record-making."

"Don't try to cover up by talking about the Party," snapped Grinin.

Valgan had long ago realized that Grinin was no friend of his. But this was the first time a real hostility had burst out so sharply and implacably.

"I've known you a good many years, Semyon Petrovich," Grinin went on. And if it's a question of noise, you can make a bigger noise about nothing than anyone I've ever met. But when a worker shows up stagnation, you get all quiet and modest."

"I know when to be quiet and when to speak."

Seryozha fell happily asleep, without the faintest suspicion of the conflicting forces crossing swords at that moment over his quiet pillow, his drowsy head.

For a fleeting second the unpleasant, disquieting, rather puzzling talk with Gurov flitted into his mind—the new quotas, the wage fund and somebody not being pleased.

But then again he saw the quiet white snow; a sense of happiness, love, a fulness of life flooded over him and his last waking thought before sleep that took him was: all the same it'll cover everything—the white, white snow.



## GOLD AND ROSE

Much had changed between Tina and Bakhirev since they had first entered that stuffy little room in the back street hut he had rented for them. When they had nothing to hide, they had been able to walk openly about the shops together for hours on end, discussing improvements and replanning the factory. But now it was different. Neither was good at deception, and the need for it made them apprehensive of other people's glances and their own betraying faces. They could not pretend, so they decided not to meet at the factory. All they had now was the jealously counted minutes in the hut. But the implacable ticking of the old-fashioned clock, the even swing of its pendulum made Bakhirev think only of slaking that thirst which burned the more fiercely, the more he thought of its satisfaction.

Things became especially difficult for Tina after her husband's arrival from Moscow. Volodya had got his degree earlier than the time fixed, but told her about it languidly, without interest. He seemed run down and she felt she must let him rest and recover his energy before talking about a divorce. And then, on the evening of his first day home he said hesitantly, "You know, Tina. . . . I started coughing there. Just coughing, like anyone might. . . . I thought I'd been smoking too much. But the doctor sent me for an X-ray. . . . And what do you think?—Infiltration. You remember that time I had pleurisy? Well. . . . But you mustn't worry. . . . It's only starting, we can stop it at once."

"Stop what?"

"Tb. But I'll soon be rid of it. Pneumothorax for three months, and that's all." He looked at her apologetically, as though he had wronged her in some way by being ill.

Her face felt stiff and cold.

"But how's it possible? You've always been so strong and healthy, stronger than anyone else."

"The doctors say it's just the strong ones that get it like this. Everything's fine, and then all of a sudden—! I overworked, of course, I was in a hurry to finish my thesis. I wanted to come to you. But don't be frightened. I'll get right again. And you won't love me less for being ill?" He looked at her hands. "You won't stop loving me?"

Pity and fear for him, the need to spare him, the need to keep silence took complete possession of her. To tell him now would kill him. She would wait till he recovered.

She set about nursing him with energy. He was given a pneumothorax and a temporary invalid pension. The doctors reassured her, saying the sickness had been discovered in time, and the only thing needed was care. As she looked after her husband, what had at first filled her with horror became a consolation. She had lost the hope of a son, and now Volodya became her sick, helpless child. She enjoyed getting up early to make him a special mixture of cream, butter, honey and aloes. She was glad to knit a warm chest-protector and bring him books from the library. Her gladness was increased by the fact that his illness gave her excellent grounds for avoiding all intimacy.

But she feared the future. It was dreadful to think of the time when she would say good-bye to Bakhirev, send him back to his wife and children and then, lonely and unwanted, come day after day to an empty room where nobody awaited her, nobody smiled to see her. The very thought of an empty house, of being needed by none, was unendurable. All her life she had brought joy, she was used to being wanted. With the years this had become a real inner need. But her meetings with Bakhirev, brief and irregular as they were, could not satisfy it. Volodya, with his helplessness, his submissive devotion, might have been specially created for Tina's urge to look after somebody. She showed more tenderness to him than she had ever done before, partly because she understood him better. In former times, when he had said, "I don't need anything else in the world if only you're beside me," the words had passed her by without touching her. But now she remembered the fulness of heart with which she had spoken the same words to Bakhirev, and the memory filled her with an understanding compassion for Volodya.

He was amazed at her unremitting care, her maternal tenderness. "It's not the doctors that are curing me, it's your love," he would say happily.

His recovery progressed rapidly; he began to be bored and restless at home, but she urged him to wait, to get himself properly on his feet again—perhaps he could take up some new scientific question and work a little at home. She wanted him to recover his health, yet she feared the time when the last trace of sickness would disappear and there would be no more reason for silence, for deception, when she would have to tell him everything and they would part. She feared that dreadful moment, she feared the chill of loneliness. And the more mercilessly she played herself for her lies, for the injury she was doing Volodya, the more devoted her care of him grew. She tried once again to break with Bakhirev. She might have found the strength to crush down her own love, but she could not trample on his grief. He called her, she heard his hoarse, choked voice, saw the suffering and reproach in his eyes, and went. Sometimes he mistook her weariness, her internal conflict for coldness.

"I have to lie as well, I'm torn in two as you are. But when I see you it's as though something carried me to you, while you don't even move an eyebrow!"

He could not cast out the fear that Tina, after filling him with longing for her and shattering the foundations of his life, might go away one day without a backward look, leaving him alone with that longing. His defeat at the factory had left him with an inordinately sensitive pride, and there were times when he wanted to storm at her, insult her, hurt her—anything, to break down what he took to be a calm arising from coolness.

When Tina explained he understood, and was drawn to her again, more strongly than ever; but if she looked at him without the usual tenderness, alarm and anger flared up again. They were like flies struggling in the web of their emotions. That spaciousness of feeling which had been between them at first was gone. At the factory they had to avoid one another, and in that small room there was barely time for hasty caresses. Confined within cramped walls, love gradually suffocated, became deformed, blind, yet continued to grow.



Time after time they discussed their future. For him to leave his wife and children and her to leave Volodya meant making five people unhappy and gaining neither peace nor happiness for themselves. To tell Katya everything and still live with his family for the sake of appearances, for the sake of the children, meant dooming them all to daily torment. Should they part, then?

When it came to this point, he said, "Anything you want, only not that. I'll go through any hell if I can only come to this hut and put my arms round you."

Love, starting with joy, was bringing difficulties, unhappiness—but even its unhappiness seemed to make it stronger.

Tina sat on a bench in one of the smaller paths of the factory grounds, looking at the evening light of the first frosty day, at the rosy mist, and waiting for Bakhirev to come from the engine shop. She wanted to warn him she would not be able to come to their room, as she had promised.

It was enough for her to picture him appearing at the end of the path, smiling at her with that special smile—submissive, joyful and eager—the smile he had for her alone, and she forgot all the tangled skein of her life. But he did not come, and suddenly she heard a musical youthful voice behind her.

"Good evening, Tina Borisovna."

"Dasha!"

Dasha had had a great admiration for Tina ever since the two of them had tried to find out why spoilage cropped up. Tina noticed that the girl's face was mature now, and even more palely transparent and open under her black shawl.

"You've changed, Dasha."

"I've got thinner."

"You're thinner, and paler, and older. . . . And prettier."

"Oh no." Dasha sat down on the bench beside her. "It's time for me to grow up. And time to think, too. Others of my age are in technical school or in the top form at evening school, and I've only just passed up into the eighth."

Tina listened, at the same time watching the turn of the path, half hidden by branches heavy with snow, where Bakhirev would appear. But it was Seryozha Sugrobin who came. His eyes were bent on the ground, but when he raised his head and looked up his face changed. Compassion, tenderness, triumph and submissiveness—that submissiveness of love which Tina well knew, passed over it in turn. For a second she was shocked—what, that boy looking at her like that? But it was impossible, stupid!

Then Dasha turned. Colour flooded her face, her eyes became a deeper blue, her lashes, lips, nostrils quivered. So that's it, Tina thought. Seryozha was looking at Dasha, not at me.

Dasha drew a deep breath, took a firm grip on herself, dropped her lashes, pressed her lips together and sat quietly, without stirring.

So that's it, Tina thought again. How these children love each other! And how plainly it's written on their faces. Is it possible that Dmitri and I look like that?

Seryozha called a greeting as he came up and went on, "Dasha, have you a minute? I've got something to ask you—about work."

Dasha rose with dignity, went up to Seryozha without raising her eyes, exchanged a few words and quietly returned to Tina. It was only when Seryozha went that she stirred and drew a free breath.

"What's the matter, Dasha?" Tina asked gently. "Why did you cut him so short?"

"But he—oh, Tina Borisovna, it wasn't about work at all."

"What was it, then?"

"He wanted me to come to the pictures with him." There was a happy thrill in the quiet voice.

"Well?"

"I won't go with him. I won't go with anybody."

"Why not?"

"Because it's just playing around for him, just to get through an evening."

"And you?"

Dasha wanted to talk—to pour it out, but she could not say a word. Tina put a finger under her chin, raised her face and looked at her.

"Little silly! Why do you run away from him? He loves you!"

Dasha moved away alarmed.

"Oh, no, no! There's nothing like that!"

"What are you frightened of? I'm not just saying it, Dasha. I can see it, it's true."

"Oh, don't say things like that! There's someone else—one of the girls from our shop. I've got used to it. I know he doesn't love me, so I won't go anywhere with him."

She feared Tina's answer, and suddenly said very quietly, in almost a whisper, "Only he hasn't been going with her lately, he hasn't been going with anyone. He only keeps asking me to go out with him, asking and asking."

"There you are, then! Why do you run away from what you want most?"

"If a person really loves another, he won't be put off by that. At least, that's how I understand love. Isn't it right?"

"No, it isn't. A woman must fight for love."

Dasha raised her head with a decisive movement.

"And that's what I'm doing."

This was a surprise to Tina. "How do you fight, Dasha?"

"Oh, every way. I've even got so I didn't send Mum any money. And once there was only one thing I dreamed of, to send her some every month. And now—now I've ordered a frock for the New Year. I'd never have done it, if it hadn't been for him."

"What's the frock going to be like, Dasha?"

"Sky blue. When I hold it up to me, it makes my eyes as blue as can be. I'm having it made at the big dressmaking place. They've got mirrors there, three of them, so you can see yourself all round, from head to foot. You can even see the middle of your back."



"Your mother won't be angry. She'll understand. She'd have bought you a frock for the New Year herself if she could."

"But the frock doesn't really matter. D'you think I don't understand? Look how many girls there are at the factory, with lots of clothes, and pretty, too. No matter what a young fellow's like, he's flattered to take a girl like that out. Even if a girl's no good really, he likes to look at her if she's smartly dressed. And Seryozha's no different from the rest. And they all run after his sort. So I have to think of something else."

"And what's that?" asked Tina, surprised at the good sense of this girl who looked almost like a child.

"You know what I want to do?" said Dasha mysteriously. "I want to cut Igoreva out. . . . Maybe it's not a nice thing to say, but I don't care. Sometimes I lie awake at night and think—if I could be just in a picture, beside him, beside Seryozha. I go to lessons. I'm learning about chill casting. I'm doing everything to get him. I even didn't send money to Mum, that's how far it's got."

"Take me with you when you go to be fitted for your frock," said Tina. "I'll see you're the prettiest of all at the fancy dress dance. Your frock's blue, you ought to be a cornflower. A wreath on your head. Cornflowers like your eyes, and ears of wheat like your hair. How'd you like that?"

"Oh—of course! But where can I get it all?"

"I'll dress you myself."

Tina pictured Dasha at her first, long-awaited dance, pictured Seryozha coming up to her, startled and unbelieving, and remembered all the confusion and suffering of her own first dance. She compared Dasha and the way she kept Seryozha at a distance with her own love, mutilated and soiled with lies. And thinking of Dasha's approaching happiness, for the first time she had a deadly clear vision of her own inevitable calamity. Two roads, and two ends to them.

Almost unconsciously, words burst from her. "You don't condemn me, Dasha?"

Dasha gasped. Tina's fine features, her pretty clothes, the special delicate perfume she used, and the respect with which the shop manager and even Bakhirev spoke to her had filled Dasha with admiration. More than once she had wished she could be like Tina. But that seemed too much ever to hope for. And now this woman, so unattainably far above her, suddenly asked, "You don't condemn me?"

"Oh, great heavens, Tina Borisovna, but what for? There's nobody like you in all the factory!"

Tina seemed to awaken. "I don't know why I said that." She rose. "Well, we've settled about the frock, then." Her lips twisted in a tormented smile. "Once upon a time I had my first dance, and it was a failure. I'll do everything I can for yours. And he loves you. You can believe me. I understand all about that. And he'll love you still more if you always stay like you are now."

She held Dasha's hand for a moment, then turned and went.

Dasha remained sitting, amazed and happy. If *she* said so, then it must be true. Would it ever really happen? But what was the matter with Tina Borisovna herself? So handsome and good and kind, there was nobody like her, and talking

about condemning her. But if only it was right, what she had said. . . . Dasha was afraid to say the word "love," even in her thoughts.

Tina strolled down the path, envying Dasha and Seryozha and the houses and the trees—everybody and everything that did not have to lie.

Bakhirev appeared round a bend. He had not expected to see her and forgetting himself, held out his arms to embrace her.

Tina fell back. "Dmitri! What are you thinking of? Somebody'll see!"

"There you are! You aren't even glad to see me."

"I was waiting for you. But you startled me."

"Still frightened?"

"How can I help it? We can hide things, deceive people for a year, or maybe two, or even three. But not all our lives."

She saw the shadow on his face, which had brightened at the moment he saw her, and reproached herself. Why did she have to say such things? It was hard enough for him as it was. And there was nothing to be done.

"What do you want, Tina?" he asked briefly.

"I want to see you smile again. I've only one wish in the whole world—for you to love me."

The smile—timid, apologetic, loving, returned slowly, and that timidity so foreign to him, that timidity which only Tina ever saw moved her as it always did. Yes, he loved her. He was hers. To think that she had been envying Dasha, who had only Seryozha! And his wife, Katya? But imagine living beside him, unloved—could there be any worse fate? Oh, he loved her, and there was no greater joy on earth and no woman happier than she was.

All hesitations, all tears, all weariness were gone.

They were always afraid to talk at the factory; five minutes spent strolling down one of the paths was a luxury which they had not permitted themselves for a long time. And it was enough to enable them to leave one another, calmed and eased.

Two letters from Moscow were handed to Tina at the office. One was from a college friend now at the Likhachev Automobile Works. Tina had written to ask about chill casting there, and he wrote back, "Come here, we need sensible, energetic people like you." The other was from the artist Dunayev. "You're probably upset by the newspapers," he said.

It was some moments before she realized what he meant. Then it came to her. There had been an article by Shaponin on the exhibition of factory artists' work, and he had had some very unkind things to say about her picture. Tina knew the weakness of her work, and the only thing which surprised her was that they should have been written by a man who had praised it only a little while before.

"I want to warn you," Dunayev also wrote, "that in a few days there'll be another article, by Virin, headed 'Through Rose-Coloured Spectacles,' and that will have some sharp words about you too. But don't worry about it. The brighter the sunshine, the darker the shadows. When Caesar drove out in his chariot, at the end of the procession there were always hired defamers to abuse him. This, he



considered, was essential for the fulness of glory. I am joking, of course. But I foresee that one thing will surprise you—the authors of these articles. Shaponin is a man whose conceit has been stung, evidently you made him smart somehow. And Virin praised you when he looked on you as a dilettante; now the success of your picture has made you a rival. Mediocrities are frightened to death of gifted rivals. But none of that matters. What I am afraid of is that stupid criticism may distract you from the main thing. You are accused of betraying socialist realism, of inordinately tall factory chimneys and of rosy colouring. Now, what I want to say to you is this: Our age has many colourings, and any of them is good and justified if it is the colouring of your own heart and if you yourself are a true son, or daughter, of your country. For some time past, certain critics have made a bugbear of rosy colouring. Don't you be frightened off by any bugbears. There are cases when it is the use of rosy colouring that demands the greatest courage. Don't force yourself. Don't extinguish your gold and rose. It is not the height of factory chimneys or the colouring that reflects the epoch. It was not by an exact picture of the bargemen's job that Repin's picture expressed his own epoch. He showed the spirit of that time, its content, because in these exhausted, tormented men fastened to a single rope one can feel strength, the possibility of an explosion. Shall I tell you what it was in your picture that interested me? It was the golden-headed boy. One senses in him an impatient eagerness for noble, victorious endeavour. My wife jokingly named the picture 'The Victor, Son of a Victor.' I don't know what helped you to get that feeling across. Real talent? In that case you will paint more pictures that will bring joy to all who love both our Soviet life, and art. Or was it a temporary lifting of the spirit that sometimes raises moderate ability to the level of talent? In that case, this will be your only picture. Well, what if it is? We can say 'thank you' for this one. But be it as it may, if you really, seriously want to study art, that can be arranged. Our Moscow apartment is small, and our family large, but we have a cottage just outside town, we could easily put you up there. Come to us whenever you like and for as long as you like."

Tina put the letter down on her lap.

Dusk was falling outside the window, and only the snow-covered roofs still held the last reflections of sunset, that same "rose and gold" of which she was accused as of a crime. She laughed softly. What if she painted the works again? Perhaps in the blue-grey tones of dusk? No, no, no! Even in that past life with her first husband she had got up early and run, barefoot, to the easel, to catch the dawn. The colours of dawn were gold and rose. And the colour of her spirit? The colour pilloried as a crime by such as Shaponin and Virin? Should she extinguish it to please them? No, and again no! If a life like hers had not dulled it—could such as Virin succeed?

Memories flooded over Tina. It was strange. So much suffering. Yet in spite of it all, deep down, these clear, gay colours lived, surged, burst out on to the canvas. Happiness? But whence? Dmitri? Yes—of course it was he. It was with him that the picture had begun. He himself was such, his love was such, he had meant so much that was wonderful—why, one year could hold enough happiness for

a lifetime. But before Dmitri? Even then, on paintings done long ago, there was always the dawn, "the colour of her spirit." But why? What was it?

Tina jumped down from the window-sill. She had to go for Nina. Tina's and Volodya's old college friend had become an expert on the new sintered hard alloys, or metallo-ceramics, as they were called, and had come to the tractor works a short time ago. She wanted to see Volodya, and Tina had promised to fetch her.

Nina lived in the hostel, in a small square room. The top quilt of the bed was starched to metallic stiffness. The pile of books made a neat pyramid, ranged according to size. The bottles of perfume and toilet water stood in an exact triangle. Everything looked as though it had been lined up with T-squares and set squares and was never moved a hair's breadth. It all seemed to express a kind of hard, geometrical loneliness.

In rooms where people loved, laughed and wept there could never be such blueprint accuracy, thought Tina in sudden realization. But that's what my room will be like when I part with Volodya. . . . Cold. . . . Dreadful.

Full-breasted, calm, homely Nina at once began complaining in her deep voice about difficulties in her job. The trouble was, she was the only expert in sintered hard alloys, there was nobody to consult, she had to cope with all problems alone, as best she could.

As they approached Tina's house, Nina became strangely restless; she straightened her collar, fidgeted with her hair, pulled down her hat, broke off in the middle of sentences and seemed not to hear Tina's questions. When she shook hands with Volodya she flushed crimson and laughed on a deep note.

"Well now, let's see what you look like!" she cried. "The same, just exactly the same! And Tina says you're ill." She turned to Tina and said peremptorily, "Now show me the house!" Her critical eye passed nothing over in Tina's simple housekeeping.

"You haven't altered either—the permanent monitor of our college group," laughed Volodya. "Just as carping and strict as ever!" He livened up, and recovered something of the gaiety, the confident arrogance of the former idol of the stadium.

Tina, however, had the feeling that the inspection was not just a matter of old habit by the former monitor; Nina had been searching closely for something. The potted aloe on the window-sill surprised her.

"Have you grown that yourself? Especially for him? And you make him drinks from it? I wouldn't have expected it from you." Without ceremony, she opened the linen cupboard. "Socks all mended. But why have you two drawing boards?"

"I help Volodya sometimes with his drafts and drawings. I like it."

The inspection over, Nina sat down on a stool in the kitchen, and let the lids sink wearily over her colourless eyes. "Well. . . . You're a good wife to him."

So that was it, Tina realized—she wanted to see what kind of a wife I'd made him.



"But how was it you let him get ill?" asked Nina sternly. "He was the strongest of any of them, and the gayest. . . . And the kindest, too. . . . There wasn't anyone else like him." She rose heavily.

"Let's go back and join him. I want some tea."

Volodya and Nina sat on the sofa, talking, while Tina laid the table. Again Nina showed that feverish gaiety and Volodya seemed to feel more at ease with her than with his wife. With Tina he was always tensely on his best behaviour, but now he lolled on the sofa, easy and relaxed. Looking at them, Tina understood how wonderful, how unattainable, how unique this handsome, kind, happy Volodya seemed to a lonely woman whom love had passed by. For her, he was the only person in the world, just as Bakhirev was for Tina herself. Too good and decent to marry without love, too unattractive to inspire any warm feeling, Nina still cherished the memory of her first and probably her only love.

And Volodya bathed in this unslaked womanly devotion and rested from his uneasy love for his wife.

Disturbed, Tina went into the kitchen. As she prepared supper, her thoughts were busy. Perhaps he would really be happier with the woman who had loved him so many years? Perhaps this was the time to tell him everything and go? Should she give Volodya and all this house to Nina, and go away to the geometrical loneliness of Nina's cell?

A woman's laughter came to her from the other room—laughter vibrant with the thrill of love. There had never been such laughter in that house. Tina had the feeling that this laughter alone was enough to give Nina the right to Volodya, that she was the rightful mistress here, not Tina.

There was a certain feeling of awkwardness between the two women at supper; only Volodya was happy and carefree. To ease the atmosphere, Tina read out her letter from Dunayev.

"So he says you've either got real talent, or you had a temporary lifting of the spirit," Nina marvelled.

"Not talent, I'm afraid," Tina sighed. "I must just have been in a very good mood."

"A nice thing!" Volodya laughed. "A specially good mood, with her husband away!"

A pang went through Tina. Lies—lies—they were everywhere; even the most innocent topic threatened a sudden exposure.

"You know what was going on in the factory, and in our shop at that time. . . . Look what a nice bit of steak I've fried you. And I queued up for nearly an hour to get these olives."

She was desperately seeking something to ease her feeling of guilt, but inwardly she scoffed at herself. Make up for it with steak and olives? She would be glad to make up with anything, anything in her power!

When it was time for Nina to go, she once more said, "Yes, you've made Volodya a good wife." Leaving this warm house for the small room where only an accustomed loneliness awaited her, she turned once more at the door, with a grateful, pitiful smile for Tina.

Gratitude? Tina thought. What for? For Volodya? For looking after him? Because he's happy with me? Golden-hearted Nina!

Again Tina had that feeling, more strongly than before, that it was not she who was the rightful mistress of that warm house. She tried to fight it down. Everything there had been created by her hands. But the main thing was lacking. She had not answered love with love, truth with truth. She must tell him. If not today, then tomorrow she must tell him and go. The time had come. But how was she to begin?

As she wiped up the dishes, Volodya came and sat beside her on a stool, as he always did. She was afraid to look at his untroubled face. She bent over the saucers, those familiar blue saucers with the white flowers. But even they pained her. Had they, too, untroubled faces?

"Nina really is nice, isn't she, Volodya?"

"The permanent monitor!" he laughed. "Could a course like ours have had a bad monitor?"

"You like her, then?"

"Of course I do."

"You seemed so happy talking . . . laughing. You like being with her, don't you?"

"What are you getting at?" Volodya began to understand, his well-shaped mouth fell open. "Look here, what d'you mean?"

"I thought maybe it might be not only as monitor that you liked her."

"You're crazy!" he cut her short. "Don't you know there's only one woman in the world for me?"

"But what if she weren't there?"

"How could you not be there?"

"Well, if I died, for instance."

"I'd die too. What's got into your head today?"

"I think it's sometimes difficult for you with me. With her, everything would be simple and easy."

"What do I need with simple and easy?" He pulled her to him and pressed his head to her side. "I don't want any simple and easy. This is what I want."

Again Tina could understand when she applied his words to herself and Bakhirev. It had once been simple and easy with Volodya, and it was always difficult with Dmitri. And had she hesitated? But how could she tell him that? How could she hurl the words into eyes shining with happiness? Not today, she thought, he's still ill. And she sought justification in care of him.

"You haven't taken your medicine," she said quickly. "I'll pour it out for you. . . . Is it bitter?"

"I'd drink anything from your hands. It's not medicine that's curing me, it's love."

A feverish flush burned on his cheeks, his classically-moulded lips smiled with overflowing tenderness. His eyes, blind with love, looked up at her.

Not today, she thought. No, not today. He must get stronger first. Let him have just a little more time to be quiet and happy.



"They're ridiculous, those two," he said suddenly.

"What two?" Tina started.

"Those—Shaponin and Virin. . . . You can't send it to the dyer's and change the colour."

"Change what colour?"

"The colour of the spirit."

## *GRANDFATHERS AND GRANDSONS*

The light struggled weakly through the thick snow that whirled against the windows of the suburban train. Seryozha shivered and dozed, wedged in between milkwomen and vegetable sellers huge in their shawls and wadded coats. He had been to a new factory, the workers had asked him to come and explain about his milling machine and chill casting. There had been a great many young people and they had listened eagerly to all he had to tell them. But on the way back the train kept stopping where the snow had drifted across the track.

Seryozha was worried. He would be late for his shift, and he'd get more black looks. The previous evening the question of another revision of pattern-makers' quotas was to have been settled. If they were raised, people would blame it on him again. And what for? Eh, if only he could have stayed there, at the factory he had just seen!

He did not know himself when it all started. There had been the silvery sheen of chill castings, and four thousand per cent, and the meeting, and that first fluffy snow. Then Gurov had asked him to take his earnings over a period of several months. There was nothing in that. Then Valgan had sent for him and asked him to undertake an urgent order from the Ministry. The chill castings were handed over to the others to finish. And there was nothing wrong about that, either. After all, if the works was in a tight spot someone must help, and whom could the director call on, if not a leading worker, an innovator?

For his chill casting method he was paid three thousand roubles. A thousand he gave to his assistant Sinenky, a thousand he spend on a real celebration with all the other lads who had helped him in any way, and a thousand he gave to his mother. He did not worry about money. He would finish that badly-paid order for the ministry, go over to finishing chill-cast patterns and earn what was coming to him. For some weeks they had made no patterns of treads, and Seryozha waited quietly for the next batch. But one day he came into the shop and saw a pile of chill-cast tread patterns beside Kondrat.

"Why've you got those patterns?"

Kondrat turned slowly.

"You think I want them? Refused them times enough. The quota's set by your machine now. They timed you. And I've got to keep the pace."

Still not understanding, Seryozha went to the shop manager.

"Why've you given those to Lukov? They're my patterns."

Gurov's mouth hardened and his eyes narrowed.

"My jacket's mine while it's on me." To point his words he drew it together in front. "If I let you have it for three hundred, then it isn't mine any more, it's yours. You've been paid three thousand for the chill castings. And I give 'em to anyone I want."

Seryozha began to understand, but still he could not believe it.

"But how's that? There's a law. . . . According to the law, an inventor is paid at the old rate for six months after his invention goes into use."

"That's the law, but there's no law saying I have to give those tread patterns to you and no one else. I can give them to anyone I want. You're a leading worker, we honour you by giving you new, interesting jobs."

Now, at last, Seryozha finally understood everything. He had been led up the garden. They were using his chill casting method, but having other workers do the final processing. The others were not inventors, there was no need to pay them the old rates for six months, they could be paid at low rates for finishing chill castings.

Although understanding had dawned, he still stammered in pitiful confusion. "But I made good models. . . . And much cheaper. The state gains by it. . . . And I. . . I. . . ." He was ashamed to speak of earnings. "I wrestled with that chill casting for half a year. . . . Nobody's thinking about thousands. . . . But just a bit of compensation for all that time. . . . It's only fair. . . ." His voice faded away.

This was what Gurov had wanted—to see him shamed, apologetic.

"What d'you think the shop gets a bonus for? For economizing the wage fund. And what'll happen if you go driving ahead with your chill casting? An overdrawn fund, that's what! So you want the others to lose their bonuses because of you? To eat black bread? Oh no, we'll stop these money-grabbing ideas! You're a leading worker, an innovator! You've got to look at things from the larger aspect, public welfare!"

Then Seryozha exploded.

"Why don't you say straight out that you won't pay according to law, and that's all! Be honest about it, at least, instead of your 'leading worker, honour, larger aspect, public welfare' and all the rest of it! You're just a pack of swindlers!"

In the shop the workers were excited and angry.

"I told you to keep quiet," Kondrat Lukov grumbled, "It was all that noise of yours that started revision of quotas."

A day to remember. The first shame, the first disappointment, like first love, are not easily forgotten.

There were many more such days. He was more frequently elected to various bodies, and invited to other factories for exchange of experience. He was constantly taken off his job, and the jobs given him were the most complicated of all. After all, wasn't he a leading worker, an innovator! Formerly, he would have thought out new ways of dealing with them, but now his mind seemed numb.

As a natural result the leading worker, the innovator, soon had the lowest earnings in the whole shop. He was ashamed to take a pay envelope containing two

hundred roubles for half a month—less than an apprentice. It was hard to meet the astonished looks, to give a cheery reply to the surprised questions. But what hurt him most was the thought of that joy with which he had brought the first castings from the foundry.

Last month he had not handed in his checks or gone for his money.

The train crawled in to the station at ten and Seryozha went straight to the works.

The wind rushed down the passageways between the buildings, carrying thick snow with it. The portraits along the main path bellied out like sails, with a quiver that gave life to the faces. Smiling mouths seemed about to break into a laugh, defiant of the blizzard. Seryozha looked at his own picture. That was what he had been like. Laughing like a fool—what had he laughed for?

He bent his head down to protect his face from the driving snow and entered the shop, stooping. Everywhere fountains of shavings sprayed out and poured away, while emulsion ran down like a waterfall and sparks shot out and died. Amid all this living, pulsing metal only Seryozha's clean, shining machine stood lonely, motionless in empty majesty—something between a museum exhibit and a gravestone.

Pay checks lay on his table. He glanced quickly through them. He knew it—again he had not made three hundred in half a month. Should he go to the director? Surely Valgan would stop it, he would not allow this injustice to go on if he knew. Was it not at his request that Seryozha got the factory out of difficulties so often? Why, people had got into the habit of saying to Seryozha "Your director." "Your director's come," "your director's sent for you." Should he go, then? But what should he speak about? Money? Go to such a special friend, to an important person about such a trifle?

He felt sidelong glances sliding over his face.

"Been doing more star turns?" one of the workers remarked nastily as he passed.

Sinenky jerked out a brief "good morning" without a smile. Kondrat barely nodded. Seryozha understood what had happened. The quotas had been raised again. No mechanization, but higher quotas. And although he'd done nothing wrong, he was to blame; it had all started with him.

The cutter hummed soothingly as usual. The machine responded obediently to every movement, every thought, every wish, as though trying to comfort him. That first ringing vibration was like a friendly "chin up!" If only he'd had a job he could get on with! But again he had a special order, "from the Ministry." The layout men refused to do the complicated job. He himself felt like saying, "to hell with it." Every week there were these stray orders, for whom and what he did not know. He knew he had been nicknamed "Valgan's page boy" and felt the truth of it. He was sick of being that but could not refuse; the director's trust made it all obligatory.



Suddenly a familiar sound vanished from the general noise of the shop. There was a deceptive sense of silence. Seryozha looked round. Kondrat Lukov's machine was still—in the very middle of the shift. One would have expected the earth to stand still sooner than Lukov's indefatigable machine.

Two more machines had stopped. Lukov said something to Gurov and looked at Seryozha. He understood they were talking about him and went over to them.

"I always used to pull down two thousand roubles a month for sure," Lukov growled. "That's all gone to hell with your chill casting. You made all the noise about it, do the work yourself."

"Was it I made all the noise? Or someone else?" said Gurov confidentially and took Kondrat by the button. Then he saw Seryozha and turned to him reproachfully. "Didn't I tell you—*either* think of the shop *or* make a big show with a record? Didn't I tell you—don't be in a hurry with your chill casting? First the plan, first get the funds for expenses, and then make all the noise you want! But you wouldn't listen. Kept on squawking 'Chill casting! Chill casting!'"

"The trouble isn't the chill casting, it's you that don't want to do things the right way, the way the law says," Seryozha flared up. "The quotas are raised, but technology isn't improved. Bakhirev gave orders long ago to lay on compressed air and install universal heads and special cutters."

"There was an order, but there's no funds," Gurov repeated stubbornly. "And there's no more Bakhirev either. He pulled one way, the director another, and we're torn in two between them."

Kondrat had been thinking, now he turned to Seryozha.

"You go and machine your chill castings yourself."

"But they don't let me! And that's against the law too!"

Kondrat was not listening; he kept growling, "You made this mess, clean it up yourself. Go and complain. Go to that director of yours."

"I will!" Seryozha's mind was made up. "Look what's going on," and he turned to Gurov. "You won't give me the chill casting, you save on the wage fund, and clap my quotas on to the others, but without my technical set up. It's a disgrace and it's turning the workers against a big thing. I'll have to go to the director."

Gurov smacked his lips and shook his head.

"I don't know whether to laugh or cry at you," he said and settled it by laughing. "Go on, go along and complain. D'you think all this was my own idea? Why, on that very day when I congratulated you at the meeting, Valgan himself told me to put a stop to those money-grabbing ideas of yours! And it was he who told me then to put you on to special jobs and hand over the chill casting to the others. Go along, go along and complain, see what you get!"

It must be a lie, Seryozha thought. To thank him, shake hands, and then behind his back talk about money-grabbing? No, Gurov could lie like that, but not Valgan! Not Valgan!

He had not noticed the workers crowding round. But Gurov did, and with apprehensive little eyes darting here and there, he started up eloquently in defence of chill casting.

"The difficulties and all the rest of it are just for the time being. Chill casting's still an infant, a new thing. It is urgently necessary for it to be applied for public good."

"You don't say! Sounds fine, works out lousy," said Sinenky angrily. "At first when we saw what Seryozha was doing we thought it was great, too, adapt the whole installation for multi-model machining of chill casting. But now we see what's happening and it stinks."

The others backed up Sinenky. But Kondrat stuck to his one idea.

"Seryozha made the mess, let him clear it up. Let him go to that director of his!"

That brought objections from several.

"Send him? The director's pet?"

"He's too young. Can't speak up properly."

"Bring the director down here!"

Gurov, frightened, hurried off to phone Valgan.

"They've stopped work, they're all round Seryozha Sugrobin. They say they won't work the chill casting."

"Wha-a-at?"

Gurov well knew that roll of thunder in the director's voice. His lips slapped rapidly against each other as he rattled, "Twenty years at the works, but never seen anything like this." Somehow the wrath must be diverted from himself. "It's Sugrobin, he's stirring it all up. Keeps talking about Bakhirev. Wants this and wants that, wants to introduce the mechanization Bakhirev ordered."

The chief engineer had been defeated, destroyed, but his shadow still walked about the works. And every now and then Valgan had to wage war against that shadow. The latest battle had taken place the previous day, in the regional Party committee.

Bakhirev had been the leading spirit in reorganizing the flow of parts in the engine shop and had reduced to the minimum the setting required by the machines. Several old machine tools had been adapted for copy milling. Since Roslavlev took over, the shop had trebled its productivity; one shift could get through the work which had previously been done by three. The leading regional organizations heard about this engine shop. And Roslavlev never missed a chance, good or bad, to come out with his "in spite of the director's opposition," "on the initiative of the shift engineer, Bakhirev. . . ."

At a bureau meeting of the regional Party committee the previous day Grinin had used the engine shop as a rod for Valgan's back. "The engine shop has proved that the factory is neglecting great possibilities. The engine shop has shown what can be done by efficient leadership. . . ."

In these words, "the engine shop has shown, has proved" Valgan heard others: "Roslavlev and Bakhirev have shown, have proved."

He came back in the worst of tempers, and when Sagurov came to complain that the sand quarry was not carrying out Bakhirev's orders and was letting the foundry workers down again, Valgan let fly. He pushed away the folder of orders with such violence that all the papers scattered over the floor.

"Go to the quarry yourself," he shouted furiously. "Go and get sand yourself! If you can't do your job here, go and wallow in the sand!"

During the war he had often allowed himself the luxury of such explosions, but had been more sparing of them in recent years. As a rule they acted like a thunderstorm, relieving his pent-up tension, but this time there was no relief.

"I'm not going to pick up those papers. And I'm not here to be shouted at." The door slammed defiantly behind Sagurov.

Valgan paced the room, fuming, treading on the scattered papers. Impossible conditions to work in! No proper chief engineer. A Party organizer who couldn't see further than his own nose. Grinin working against him in the regional committee. Bakhirev working against him here. And no order, no discipline—all owing to the anarchy of the previous year, of course. They'd have to be taken in hand. Firmly. No weakness.

This was the moment when Gurov telephoned.

Valgan appeared at the door of the pattern shop—a living expression of determination, his face stony except for a faint quivering of lashes, nostrils and lips, like the quivering of leaves in the silence that precedes a storm. He stood at the door looking up and down the shop. Four machines were standing. His steps rang sharply as he went up to the first.

"Whose is this machine?"

"Mine."

He switched on the current and glared at the operator with a look that paralyzed the will.

"Start working!"

Just as quickly and firmly he went to the second machine.

"Whose is this? . . . Start working!"

Leaving the even hum of two machines behind him, he went to the third.

"Whose is this?"

The reply came with a stubborn slowness that was almost casual.

"That? Oh, that's mine."

"Get to work!"

The broad-shouldered young fellow stood where he was, looking like a bull about to charge.

"All right, but I won't finish chill castings, so you can do as you like about it."

"What's your name?"

"Mine? Kondrat Lukov."

Valgan turned to Gurov. "Lukov's discharged!" he rapped out. He glanced round, saw a foreman he happened to know. "You run that lathe to the end of the shift," he snapped. "Lukov's not working here any more."

He turned to go on, but Lukov, breathing heavily, came and stood close up against him.

"What's that for?" His voice held the anger and injury of a boy who has received an undeserved cuff. "I'm Lukov, I turn out a hundred and fifty per cent of the quota for sure, except when I'm put on those chill castings. They



raise the quotas but they don't give us the machines to do it. What d'you get after me for?"

Seryozha came up. "It's quite true, Semyon Petrovich," he said, his voice, breaking with excitement, was like the crow of a cockerel. "It's not Lukov's fault. It's as though I'm to blame, and for no fault of mine. It's my chill castings, my quotas they're getting."

He stood there, thin, hollow-cheeked, stretching out his chicken's neck, staring with puzzled brown eyes, imagining himself a person close to Valgan, a person with influence, sure that he could put everything right.

A grand defender sprung up, thought Valgan. Got a bit above himself.

"Go to your machine. And be quick about it," he snapped at Seryozha, his tone harsher than before.

Seryozha was pitifully taken aback. His brown eyes became round, almost stupid in their bewilderment, but still expectant, still pleading, as though saying, "Wasn't it me you called your best milling machine operator, the pride of the works? You—you—or is Gurov right?"

That fixed gaze exasperated Valgan.

"Do your talking after working hours. Get that?"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the dinner-hour whistle sounded.

"And that's now—the whistle's gone," said Seryozha with a twisted smile.

The workers gathered round the director.

"You can't do it, Semyon Petrovich."

"Chill casting, quotas up a second time, but no new mechanization."

"Lukov's right!"

The workers had formed a ring round Valgan. He glanced round, quickly took out his cigarette case and held it out with his irresistible smile.

"Since it's the dinner hour, let's have a smoke together. Well, well, well, I just don't know my pattern-makers. There've been financial difficulties with the new mechanization, the fund's been held up. But I'll get it all right, if not today, then tomorrow. It's only a matter of a day or two. But is that a reason for you to start a meeting in the middle of the shift, to forget all your pride in your work? Have you forgotten how we did the impossible together during the war? Why, we made first-class engines under canvas, in a blizzard!"

He put his cigarette case back into his pocket and his eyes travelled quickly over the crowd of workers and down the alleyway. Seryozha understood—he was hoping to slide away with nothing but vague talk. Who and what was he? Was he that thoughtful, considerate man who had talked to his "best milling machine operator" like a friend? Or was he the man who only a moment ago had snapped, "Get back to your machine" to each and every one, indiscriminately? Or still worse, that double-faced hypocrite who talked about the "best milling machine operator" to your face and behind your back about "money-grabbing tendencies"? A two-faced twister? In a moment he would turn and go. And everything would be just as it is now. Kondrat Lukov's words rang in his ears. "You made the mess, you clear it up." Well, did he lack courage to do so?

"There was patriotism. There was workers' pride. But what have we now?" Valgan continued. Seryozha's chin came out stubbornly.

"There's patriotism and pride now too. Only it's not wartime. In those days engines had to be made somehow, no matter how. But now it's different. Now there's only one means, progressive technique. There aren't any others."

So this young fellow whom the director had raised up really had got too big for his boots. Valgan decided Gurov had been right, it was Seryozha who had made all the trouble.

"All this turns folks against rationalization," said Sinenky.

Valgan looked at the angular youth and remembered that he was the best comedian and *balalaika* player in the amateur entertainers' troupe. Here was a chance to lighten the atmosphere.

"Aha, here's our *balalaika* star," he laughed. "The pride of the entertainers. Are you an inventor too?"

But Sinenky was in no mood for joking. He frowned.

"I did start something. But I dropped it. If the workers look for better ways, more rational ways, the management ought to be twice as keen on it. Otherwise, what do we get?"

"We can see what we get, we've got it," Seryozha caught him up. "It's the chief engineer's job to introduce progressive technique. We had Bakhirev, he helped all he could. He understood us. We were all trying for the same kind of thing. But Ukhanov doesn't care a rap."

Valgan turned sharply towards him.

"And what kind of judge are you? You were crawling about under the table when Ukhanov and I and your older workmates built this factory. Who's raised you up? The factory! Who made you a bearer of progressive technique? Again, the factory and the people in it. You take it upon yourself to teach everybody else, but look at your own work! A most important order from the Ministry, and not done yet!"

"Either talk, or work," Gurov added. "There was a time when you could think out gadgets and cope with far more difficult jobs. You just aren't interested in your work any more."

"Yes. I've lost interest. I don't want to work on odds and ends, nor yet for show. I can do things for the whole shop. I can do much more. . . ."

"He wants more money," said Gurov.

"Yes, I've heard you refused to sign your checks," said Valgan. "Refused to take your wages."

That completed Seryozha's realization. So Valgan knew everything; he had told Gurov exactly what to do. And it was to him Seryozha had wanted to go for fair play!

"Harykari," grinned Gurov.

What on earth was that "harykari," Seryozha wondered, then it dawned on him. Hara-kiri. What the Japanese used to do—kill themselves if they were insulted.

The director's velvety voice echoed Gurov. "Yes, real hara-kiri!"

Seryozha saw Gurov's grin on Valgan's face. Valgan and Gurov were one and the same. Valgan was cleverer, but his words, his handclasp concealed the same thing, the same utter indifference. Seryozha remembered "Valgan's page boy." Yes, it was quite true. Valgan had flattered him, made a fuss of him so long as he was needed for display, or for odd jobs, those special orders, one single part. But when his whole heart and soul were in a really big thing, when he needed help on a large scale, when it was a matter of changing the system of work, then he was called to heel like a little dog. Put in his place! But he wasn't any little dog to take it. It wasn't money he was thinking of, and he wasn't interested in special jobs, he was thinking of the shop as a whole, the whole factory.

"The factory trained and taught you, but you seem to prefer to learn from the Samurai," said Valgan. "It's their kind of honour you want!"

"I've got more than they have." Seryozha's voice shook. "Only mine's different. There it is, my honour. In the milling-cutters. In the chill casting. In progressive technique."

It was no longer the chicken with outstretched neck that now stood before Valgan—that squawking chicken that had tried to defend Lukov. This was a mature man, weary, with a firm, nervous face, who looked the director very straight in the eye. Valgan saw the alteration and at once changed his tone.

"Eh—hara-kiri," he joked, and now there was warmth in his voice. "But don't you forget, Seryozha, who taught you the right attitude towards progressive technique. It was the factory—and the people in it. And those administrators, those managers you're attacking, including Gurov and myself!"

His voice throbbed with paternal kindness, as in former days; but Seryozha could not endure its falsity. It was a lie! And the lie incensed him more than the former roughness, more than outright injustice. He wanted to tear it to shreds, that lie, to destroy it utterly.

His eyes focussed on slips of paper. Figures—two hundred and eighty roubles. His work checks.

"This is your attitude to progressive technique," said Seryozha and tore them up.

With another quick change Valgan became quietly firm.

"So that's it, Sugrobin. There was a time when people looked up to you, as an example. But what can anyone learn from you now? Conceit? Greed for money? I've been hearing for a long time about your antics. People have been saying your portrait ought not to be in the place of honour. I wouldn't listen. But it looks as though I'll have to listen."

Dasha wandered about the snow-swept paths waiting for Seryozha to come out of the pattern shop. The shift had ended, but there was no sign of him. It was about a fortnight since she had seen him; she was worried, she could not think what had happened. How could that which had begun at the New Year dance break off for no reason at all?



Tina had got her ready for the dance. She made Dasha put on a stiffly starched slip under the frock, so that the skirt stood out like a bell. Then she fastened a silk ribbon tightly round the waist. She cut down the neck and stitched it to fall below the collar-bones, and Dasha flushed—she had never worn such an open neck. She damped the curls made at the hairdresser's the previous day, combed the hair smoothly out from a centre parting and braided it tightly into two plaits. She put a slender wreath of corn on Dasha's head and twined ears in the two plaits. The blue frock was adorned with cornflowers.

At home, Dasha could not make up her mind whether it was good or bad. It was so very different from the kind of fancy dress worn by the other girls. But when she saw herself in the great mirror at the club she gasped. Could it really be her? From the bell-like blue skirt rose the slender body of a girl with white shoulders and a smooth golden head.

From the first moment it was sheer bliss. As she came to the top of the stairs, Seryozha caught sight of her. He at once left everybody else and made straight for Dasha. They were together the whole evening. Music filled the air, coloured confetti flew and settled on heads and shoulders, balloons floated overhead, and all round were flower-girls, star-girls, Ukrainians. Circassians, colourful and strange. Seryozha was not wearing fancy dress. After all, why should he? He was enough in himself—a famous worker, young and handsome, what could be better than that? Towards the end he took Dasha downstairs, to the winter garden, with its tubs and pots of plants. Music coming faintly from above sounded sweeter for the distance. The lights kept changing—red, green and orange.

Seryozha's face seemed suddenly mysterious, as though he were looking at her from the depths of night; as the lights turned red it became bold, inspired, then it glowed golden as though in the summer sun. But in a greenish half-light it bent low over her, and she heard the slow, murmured words, "So this is Dasha!" Then in a ray of wine-coloured light he laughed. "Do you know how many times I've said that? This is the fourth. The first time was that night when you stopped after your shift with that new girl. The second time was when you wouldn't come with me because I tried to hold hands with you. And the third was when you ran away from me through the snow."

Again everything was flooded with bluish-green, and the trees seemed to be growing at the bottom of the sea. Seryozha bent lower and said—more slowly still, and softly, "And the fourth time is today—so this is Dasha, a golden ear of corn!"

After that dance they were often together, but Dasha was still shy about being alone with him and always collected a whole party. Then all of a sudden Seryozha seemed to forget her. At first she told herself he was busy, but then she began to worry. A few days ago she had hung about for almost an hour, waiting for him, and when he came out had pretended that it was just by chance they met. He had evidently been pleased. He had come straight up to her and said, "Dasha, don't think anything wrong about me. They've had me all tied up—talks, conferences, and exams at the technical school as well. But the main thing is, I'm all at sea

myself. I'm in a daze. . . . But that'll all pass off and then we'll be together again."

That was what he said. And then he disappeared once more.

Dasha walked round and round the paths, and troubled thoughts went round and round in her head. No, he doesn't love me, he was just playing around. With my kind of love I get up in the morning, thinking of him, and go to bed at night—still thinking of him. No, he doesn't love me. But yet—he's not the kind to say things he doesn't mean. If he says something, it's true. But perhaps he loved me and then he stopped? What I was afraid of—it's happened?! Oh, what shall I do? I've got to find out, I've got to know! As soon as I see him I'll start walking quickly, he mustn't guess I've been waiting. If he stops me I'll say I was just passing by. If he starts talking I'll answer, but I'll be dry and curt—at first, anyway. He mustn't think I'm running after him.

At last Seryozha appeared. He came out, head down, eyes on the ground. What had happened? He didn't even walk the same way; he wasn't like himself at all!

Dasha forgot all her resolutions. She did not assume any indifferent air, she did not hurry, she stood still, gazing at him.

Why didn't he wrap up his neck? It was snowing. And his neck looked so long and thin. Like the portrait in the newspaper.

She had cut Seryozha's picture out of the *Pravda* and hidden it away. It showed him thin, long-necked, smiling with one side of his mouth and looking at least thirty.

Now as he walked, the muscles twitched in that long neck and he smiled with one corner of his mouth, like the portrait—a crooked, bitter smile. Dasha gasped. How had they done this to him? She wanted to go to him, but some other men joined him. She saw Sinenky in the distance and hurried over to speak to him.

"What's happened to Seryozha?"

"Tragedy and comedy," he jerked out. "Your hero-sweetheart—hara-kiri!"

"What, what?" He walked so fast that Dasha had to run to keep up with him.

"Torn up his pay checks and had a row with the director. Oh, hell!"

Sinenky hurried away, leaving Dasha on the path. She stood hesitating. What should she do now? Wait? But how much longer should she wait? Go to him—at home? But how could she? She had been there before, she had gone to see Vasil Vasilyevich, but that had been before she knew Seryozha, everything had been simple then. But now? How could she go in? What could she say? But then, too, how could she think of pride if Seryozha was in trouble?

Resolutely she went to the familiar house.

She knocked several times but nobody answered. She cautiously entered. In the kitchen there was a smell of something burning. Dough had risen over the edge of a big pan and dripped over on to the table.

"Mum, how could you do such a thing?" she heard Seryozha's angry voice on the other side of the curtains that covered the inner door. "You're not a char-woman to go out washing! Don't ever do anything like that again. We'll manage."

"But how can we manage?" Dasha recognized his mother's voice. "You don't bring anything home. You and I can make do with potatoes. But what about Tolik? He's got to have butter."

There was a second's silence, the wardrobe door creaked, and Seryozha's voice came, raised almost to a shout. "There! Sell those! Sell everything!" Dasha's eyes went to the narrow opening between the curtains. Something brown flew past and flattened on Tolik's bed. She moved closer. "And that too!"

Seryozha seized something and hurled it across the room—something of a familiar light grey. That lovely overcoat!

His mother burst into tears.

"Why are you like this? Shouting! Throwing things about! You'd do better to bring your wages home."

"I'll sell everything, but I won't take two hundred roubles! I'll work for nothing first!"

Vasili Vasilyevich came out of his room. His eyes blinked rapidly, his kindly face was crimson making his moustaches look bigger and whiter. Been having a drink or two, thought Dasha.

"Now that's enough noise," said Vasili Vasilyevich pacifically. He picked up Seryozha's coat, shook it out and hung it up in its place again. "And you, Nastya, stop sniffing. It'll all come right in the end. And as for him not taking the money—he's quite right. Money isn't the point. It's his pride in his work—and the value they put on that work. I wouldn't take it either, in his place."

The smell of burning was getting worse. Dasha ran to the stove. She took off a pan of cereal and went into the other room.

"I knocked, but you didn't hear. So I came in and found the cereal burning. I've taken it off."

"Dasha!" cried Seryozha, surprised; then he frowned. "Did you hear everything?"

"If I'm an outsider, consider I didn't," said Dasha quietly but very definitely. It hurt her to see Seryozha embarrassed so she turned to Nastasya Petrovna. "I'll bring some butter for Tolik tomorrow from the parcel Mother sent. The butter's really good, and the eggs too, they're our own, not like what you buy. The dough's run over in the kitchen. Shall I knead it or roll it out?"

She turned to helping with the cooking, to give Seryozha time to recover himself.

Before she had finished rolling the dough, Kondrat and Sinenky appeared. They were very much excited, and showed no surprise at her presence—in fact, they hardly noticed her. She moved one of the curtains a little so she could see and hear everything in the other room.

Seryozha sat bent over the table, doodling as his habit was. Sinenky shuttled up and down the room. Kondrat stood motionless by the stove as though he had grown into the floor. Vasili Vasilyevich had disappeared, probably into his own room. Dasha heard Kondrat growl. "What did he do that for? And who did he hit out at? Me! When have I ever let the shop down? I've never refused. . . ."



Sinenky turned on his heel and rattled, "Eh, d'you think he knows you? Or me, for that matter? What am I, to him? A *balalaika* comedian! Sinenky who played at a concert—that's the Sinenky he remembers. But Sinenky who helped with the chill casting—that doesn't matter."

"Just lashed out," Kondrat kept on. "Discharged! Who'll let him get away with that? Huh—a fine mas-ter!" he hissed. "If I want to stop, I'll stop, and if I want to go I'll go without any help of his. I won't have to look far for a job, not me! They'll be glad to get me, too!"

"Why don't you say anything, Seryozha?" asked Sinenky.

Dasha heard a cold voice, unlike Seryozha's.

"What's there to say? I'm finished. Washed up. That's all."

Sinenky stopped pacing the room; he stood looking hard at Seryozha.

"So you're giving up?"

"What do I want from them? That portrait? They can take it down as soon as they like. Or money? . . . They talk about my doing star turns when I go to other factories. If I did that, I could earn all I wanted. I could be anything you want at any factory—miller, layout man, grinder, turner, mechanic. But that wasn't my idea. I was thinking of production. Only—nobody wants what I've been doing. Well, why should I worry, then? Do I need it if they don't? No, I'm through. I shan't do any more inventing. I really will do star turns, and make something out of it!"

"Yes, you get so you're ready to say to hell with it all, and go out for easy money with the *balalaika* or star turns," said Sinenky. "What does it all matter?"

"Agh, you sons-of-bitches!" came from the other side of the wall. The loud, unknown voice held the rasp of old age. Then Vasili Vasilyevich's door opened, giving a glimpse of his decanter, tray and glasses. Grandad Roslavlev appeared at the door. Always thin and small, he was now dried-up and shrunken. The bushy white eyebrows twitched on his handsome face that seemed too big for his body.

Kondrat rose on tiptoe to look over Grandad Roslavlev's head.

"The grandads have been having a drink, looks like. Anything left for the grandsons?"

But Roslavlev shut the door tight behind him.

"Hold your tongue, you son-of-a-bitch!" he repeated and turned to Vasili Vasilyevich. "Give me some brine from the pickles."

Vasili Vasilyevich poured it out. Roslavlev took a few sips, cleared his throat, rubbed his face with his handkerchief, sat down, looked at the young men and then spoke sternly.

"Time for a bit of sober, sensible thinking. . . . Leave the works? Go round playing the star? But whose works is it, tell me that. Valgan's? No, it's my works!" The old man stamped with his thin, crooked leg. "And it's his works!" He pointed to Vasili Vasilyevich and stamped again. "And it's yours, that works is, you sons-of-bitches! And it's right, you have been spoiled by too much fuss made of you." He turned to Seryozha, raised his bristling brows, looked him up and down and finally said, "You tell me, how've you got to be like this?"

"Like what?"

"Like what you are! Look there, the engineering books you read. And you can make technical drawings. Like a professor! But have you ever stopped to think what you're living on, where you've got it all? Every door open! If you want to go into the experimental lab—it's there for you! They take you in a car to a college, to the director, as if you were something precious! There's technical school for you, right at the factory! Have you gone blind, can't you see whose plate you're eating from? Stuffed yourself and that's all!"

The old man stamped again, but Sinenky broke in. "But Kornei Korneyevich! What is this, what are you talking about?"

"Maybe ye'd like to know how we were taught?" the old man went on, unheeding. "I was odd-job boy. I'd be sent to the workshop, start looking at something and I'd get a cuff, go somewhere else and another cuff. Tried to keep out of the way so the foreman wouldn't see me. Got a bit bigger—and into prison for sticking up for myself. And that was my schooling—from prison to exile, from exile to prison."

"I wasn't in prison—no," Vasili Vasilyevich shook his head and his eyes narrowed. "Half my life I knuckled under. . . . My father got burned to death with molten metal. There were seven of us. And I was the eldest. And the director we had—! He'd come by, and everyone cringed. Straighten your back, look him in the face—and he'd got your number. Defiant! And out you'd go. I'd only one consolation, like a fool, and that was religion. I'd go to church, and down went my head again. So there I was, half my life long, always with my head down. But then I straightened up properly! And now this is what I tell you. . . ." The old man became still redder, and his unusual excitement surprised Seryozha. "This is what I tell you. I'll go without bread, without water, without a coin in my pocket—I'll do anything so long as I don't have to stoop. You, Seryozha—you've never had to bow your head, and you don't know how to value that. Valgan's no good. But we aren't here to serve him, he's there to serve us! We can show him the door. And you—soon as he shouts at you—you're wanting to be off! Oh, it's true enough, there's plenty of factory gates all round, and all of them open. But what if it wasn't a director you'd got but a factory owner, not Valgan but the worse sort of boss, and there was nowhere you could go? Cringe to him, spend your whole life cringing? Ugh—that's something you don't forget in forty years, it still rangles! You've never known anything like that, not in your worst dreams! If you'd had a bit of it—even in a dream—it'd teach you sense."

"What are you both getting at us for?" wailed Sinenky. "At the works Valgan gives us thunder, and here the old 'uns give us lightning! Where can we go?"

"Call that thunder?" said Vasili Vasilyevich between a snort and a laugh. "In wartime, now, Valgan really could do a bit of thundering. Fire you for anything. But it's different now. Tried to shout at Sagurov. 'Go to the quarry!' And got as good as he gave. Shouting doesn't help him these days."

Dasha had long ago left the cooking and stood in the doorway, afraid to miss a word. Roslavlev shook his grey mane.

"Aye, that Valgan. Even he can feel the year we're living in. It's a year of change, and that's why it's difficult. But you—the young 'uns, you can't feel

it. Valgan can see that if he doesn't get out of the old ways, he'll find himself out altogether. And you—you howl 'mas-ter'!" He mimicked Kondrat. "D'ye know what that word means now? Just after the Revolution, in St. Petersburg, Lenin went with the workers to a factory. 'Take over,' he said, 'you're the masters here now.' Aye, that's what it is. But you—members of the Comsomol, too—you've lost the feeling of being the masters. Valgan's got under your skin and all you can think of is running off. What d'ye think he is, that Valgan—a boss set over the people? Who is he?" the old man asked sternly and answered just as sternly, "he's the servant of the people. He only needs to lose their confidence—and there's no more Valgan! And who are you?" He turned to Seryozha. "You're a leading worker, an innovator—but only as long as what belongs to everybody concerns you too, as long as you make it your business. But once you lose that feeling that it's yours—there's nothing left, no leading worker, no innovator. Just a star turn!"

"But stop a minute, Kornei Korneyevich," said Seryozha. "I've got to understand. What's up, what's it all about? I did odd jobs on special orders and Valgan was the best friend I had. I did a big thing for the works and he stands in my way like a brick wall. Beat my head against it and not a dent can I make, only get a sore head. Why's that?"

The old men exchanged wry grins.

"At 105 Valgan's all for us, at 125 he's got no use for us," said Vasili Vasilyevich.

"That's too deep for us, just tell us what you mean in plain words," Sinenky begged.

"What d'ye get praised for, what d'ye get bonuses for?" said Vasili Vasilyevich. "For turning out more than the plan. If the factory goes five per cent over the year's quota, there's a bonus and praise and peace and quietness. But what if you come out with twenty-five per cent over? Then those folks at the Ministry'll scratch their heads and give you a bigger plan. And there'll be all sorts of worry and bother, because the bigger the plan, the harder it is to carry it out."

"We all know that," Sinenky interrupted. "What of it?"

But Seryozha had got the point.

"Simple enough. If you help to pull up output to 105 per cent then you're grand, you're an example, you get a bonus. But if you push the whole shop up to 125, then you're just a pain in the neck." He threw down his pencil and went on acidly, "Of course, if you've got the proper kind of man at the head, he'll use his brains and find a way that'll be good for everybody. Only—I went to Ivushkin—you know him, the Party organizer in our shop, and I said to him, it's progress and technique that are needed now. Is it right to rely on conscience, a sense of duty and nothing else? Neither the shop managers nor the foremen have any personal, financial incentive in progress. Why should Gurov let himself in for a lot of work and bother with our chill casting? He fills quotas and gets bonuses as it is. But if he starts upsetting everything with chill casting, what does he get? The wage fund overdrawn, all sorts of bother and no bonuses."



"What did Ivushkin say?" asked Vasili Vasilyevich.

"What could he say? 'It's quite true, there are some individual cases of injustice in the system of material incentive'. . . . To him it's individual cases of injustice, but to me—it's the whole thing."

"If you've got individual cases of injustice but the right sort of people, they'll be straightened out," said Sinenky. "But if you've got the wrong sort, well, better pick up your feet and move on."

"Is that so?" Roslavlev stamped again. "Here's a fine young cockerel—give him everything right and just, and all in a minute! But when you were working on that chill casting system—you tried it out a dozen times, maybe more, eh? Add a bit in one place, polish off a bit in another? But here—look at the size of it all! You can put one mistake right, change one wage scale, and you'll find that in doing it there's a million people you've hit for no reason at all, and another million you've paid extra—and for no reason, either."

"But what can we do?"

"Stick at it! Things'll be better when we make 'em better. You push your ideas. Valgan wants a hundred and five, you give him a hundred and fifty-five!"

"There's an idea we had—several moulds on the table," said Sinenky seriously. "Multi-pattern chill casting, that's what we thought of. We tried it but it didn't work. The moulding-sand wall was too thin, it collapsed and there was just a mess. We need some help. I wrote higher up, spoke to them, too, but nobody's interested."

"Spoke? You—speak?" said Roslavlev. "You don't speak, you squeak, all by yourself. Whine and squeak. Plenty more like you in the shop, too—whiners and squeakers. Why don't you get together—the Comsomol, in a proper, organized way? Then you could speak so you'd be heard. Eh, but you've been spoilt all right!"

Sinenky turned and looked at Seryozha, narrow-eyed.

"What about it, Seryozha?"

"What's the good of asking him, he's no leader," said Roslavlev bitingly. "He was once, a leader of the youth. But then he went off by himself. And how far has he got alone? Don't hope for anything from him. Look at him, sitting there—not a word to say for himself. Thinking of star turns."

Seryozha shifted his shoulders uncomfortably.

"Lay off us, Kornei Korneyevich. We'll get together tomorrow. And we'll have some of the lads from the town Comsomol committee, too. And Chubasov. You'll soon see whether we're whiners or not."

Sinenky livened up. "I'll give him *balalaika* comedian! I'll play him a tune, and if he doesn't want to dance to it, he can have a funeral march! If Chubasov doesn't help, and the town committee doesn't help, we'll just go to the regional committee. Or the Central Committee, if it comes to that!"

"Flying high," observed Kondrat.

"And why not? You think they won't take any notice of us? I'm telling you, when they get letters from workers, they take notice, and plenty!"

Roslavlev pointed at Seryozha's books.

"Got plenty of stuff to read. And that's good. Books help to speed up the process of life. But they're only good if they are part of its flow, not when they hedge you off from it."

"But I'm not hedging myself off, honest I'm not!"

"We ought to drink to something like this," mumbled Kondrat plaintively. "The old 'uns are on their high horse today. Take a drink themselves but don't give the young 'uns any, just give us hell and that's all."

The lads and Roslavlev moved towards the door. Dasha wanted to go as well, but Seryozha stopped her.

"Wait a bit, I'll see you home."

As Roslavlev took leave he turned glumly to Vasili Vasilyevich with a jerk of the head towards the lads.

"Aye, they'd lost their feeling of being the masters, lost their sense of responsibility. . . . My granddaughter wrote a school composition on Oblomov a while ago. She wrote, 'Oblomov was the product of his age.' Then another time she wrote one about Maresyev, and again he was the 'product of his age.' Well, I asked her, 'What's the main difference? Tell me that!' One, she says, was the product of feudalism and the other of socialism. But that wasn't enough for me. 'Tell me the main difference in their qualities.' She said this and that, went all roundabout, but I couldn't get the real thing out of her. And what is it? Oblomov certainly was the feeble, pottering product of his age. But Maresyev? He wasn't just a 'product,' he was the real and lawful master of it. And you," the old man turned to Seryozha, "how've you got to be what you are?—A milling machine operator of twenty, who wants to rearrange the whole shop, with the factory opening schools and colleges for you and directors and professors shaking hands with you and talking to you like an equal! What you were born of, that you understand. And whether you're good or bad, still you're a product of our socialist age—that you understand too. But you haven't got as far as seeing you're the master, the real lawful master. No, you haven't got that far yet!" The old man's shaggy brows drew angrily together again as he repeated, "Lost the feeling that it's all yours, lost it. Got to get that feeling back again. And not just in words—get moving! Use a hammer if their heads are too thick! You're our next shift, damn your hides! The next shift of workers!"

"You're too hard on us, Kornei Korneyevich," Seryozha protested. "A fellow can say all sorts of things when he's mad, but we haven't lost anything, not really."

"Prove it!" The old man drew himself up to his spare height and his eyes under the shaggy brows looked out with dignity as though saying, "Inside I'm as good as ever I was; as for my arms and legs—well, that's not worth talking about."

Seryozha watched him leave, and as the door closed let out his breath in a sigh. "He's fine, Grandad, your friend Kornei Korneyevich."

"A man of the highest principles," said Vasili Vasilyevich with great pride, raised a dark finger and repeated, "The very highest principles!"

Seryozha walked with Dasha to her gate.

"Let's sit down."

She seated herself obediently on the snow-swept bench.

The trees creaked in the wind, the gate creaked on a different note, and there was a metallic scraping somewhere—probably a drain-pipe had torn loose and was grinding and beating against the wall. They were quite alone in the empty, wind-swept street.

"Gave me a real dressing-down, those old men—and they were right," said Seryozha, as though thinking aloud. "Of course it was my pride up and kicking," he went on, as though justifying himself to Dasha. "It isn't the money that matters. If the state needs it, I'll hand it over myself. Eat dry bread and whistle. It's something else got under my skin. We have a law, the basic law of our society, 'To each according to his work.' Well—is my work the worst in the whole shop? It's an insult! And what have they chosen to insult me about? Look—I go to technical school, I play football, I make a speech. You can call me a bad student, a bad speaker, a rotten goalkeeper, all right. But leave my work alone! My work means everything to me. And it wasn't just myself I was thinking about, either, it was the shop. Leave my work alone, don't touch that!" He jerked his head back so that the collar of his coat opened, baring his thin neck.

His pride was getting up in arms again. The bitterness of his words troubled Dasha. But he cut himself short.

"Thinking about myself again. It's got under my skin and I can't seem to get it out. Wanted to stop inventing. But there's something keeps itching inside. Sinenky and I, we'd got a real big idea. In the engine shop—it'd push production up to three times what it is now. Not just five per cent over the target, or even twenty-five, but three times the quota, no less!"

Dasha listened, trying to see his face through the darkness, through the drifting snow-flakes, to read his present and his future.

So that's what you're going to be like, she thought. Hot, flinging yourself into things, nerves taut like *balalaika* strings. You'll forget everything for your work. . . . You'll forget me too, just as you forgot me that month because of the chill casting system. And if you loved anyone else, you'd forget her just the same for days at a time. It's the way you're made. And you're quite right to forget anyone for the work you're doing. Only how'll I make myself fit in with you, with the way you're made?

Seryozha was wearing felt boots. Dasha had put on Vera's galoshes over her shoes. They looked nicer, but her feet were numb. She wanted to move them, stamp them, but was afraid to miss what Seryozha was saying, to break the flow of his thoughts. She wanted to share those thoughts always. And how could she if she did not learn to understand how they arose, how they moved? She had known him gay and high-spirited, but look at the way everything seethed inside!

"Today's going to be useful," Seryozha continued. "Gurov and Valgan are the enemies of our ideas. And an enemy's like a grindstone, sharpens your wits!"



He fell into thought, mechanically tracing something in the snow with a stick. Dasha already well knew that habit of his—to trace the patterns of his thoughts.

"What's that you've drawn in the snow?"

He laughed.

"Oh, Dasha! I've got another idea. If only I can pull it off!" It was Seryozha's old voice again. "I've been thinking about ceramic cutting tools. D'you understand?" He turned and his coat fell further open. Dasha wanted to fasten it but felt shy about doing so, and he did not notice. "After all, a ceramic grindstone sharpens steel. Ceramic's cheap and doesn't wear away fast. Only it's fragile. Can't stand up to knocks or jars. That means we'd have to ensure an even, steady action of the cutters. We could increase the number of teeth. You understand? I'll draw it. Let's go under the lamp, it'll be lighter."

He traced an outline with a twig but snow flurries raised by the wind kept covering it and he said, "Hey, stop that!" as though the snow could hear him.

Dasha tried to follow what he was doing, and suddenly it came to her.

"I see the idea!"

"You can arrange the cutter teeth like this. Or look, this way too, or this. I've thought of five ways! I'm just itching to try it out!"

Snow flurries raced past, obliterating Seryozha's diagram; and Seryozha's thoughts raced too. Dasha's face burned and chilled in the wind.

She remembered the village and the trembling bridge high over the swift current. There had been a gay, frightened thrill in running to the middle and looking down at the rushing, tumbling, foaming water far below. And now, as she looked at Seryozha's smooth forehead, she seemed to see right into his mind, into the swift current of seething thought, and again she felt that frightened thrill. His head was burning, yes, it was almost dreadful, such tension of thought. It had taken him away from her, swept him away like the wind swept the snow. But all the same she loved him. Loved him all the more for being what he was. But how, how was she ever to learn to adapt herself to him?

"Will you come tomorrow?" he asked.

"Yes—I'll come. . . ." But immediately came the thought—every day? Ought I to do that? "I mean, I would, but Mum's coming tomorrow," she corrected herself hastily. "She's been invited to a conference of livestock breeders."

"Bring her with you."

Dasha could not find a ready answer to that. Why did he say it? What was in his mind? Her thoughts whirled in confusion as her lips stammered awkwardly, "Yes, but—yes, but she'll feel awkward, she doesn't know you."

"Why should she feel awkward about coming to see your fiancé?" said Seryozha, as quietly and simply as though it were all settled long ago.

Dasha raised a hand as though to ward off something. Could this really be—it?

How she had waited for this moment! Since the New Year dance she had let herself contemplate it secretly. She had imagined that Seryozha, gay and wonderful, would again take her into the winter garden at the club and to the distant strains of music, slowly tell her of his love. But he was not gay, he was tormented;

there was no music, only the scraping of the metal drain-pipe, and he did not speak slowly, but casually.

She might have felt hurt, but in the same instant she understood—her love guided her thoughts. Yes, that's the kind of man he is. In a flash she saw her whole future life with Seryozha. There would be cutting tools, chill casting, centrifugal casting, gears, there would be the racing flow of Seryozha's thoughts, and if she opposed her own self to that current it would sweep her away. Thought was Seryozha's life. But her life? Hers would be to care for that seething head. He would love her, he would be kind and tender, but he would often forget all about her. Even now, he had never once thought to ask whether her feet were cold in her thin rubber galoshes or her shoulders under her thin coat. It was not selfishness, it was because his head was filled with other things. He was kind, and he loved her. If it had occurred to him that she might be cold, he would have put his own coat round her shoulders, his own felt boots on her feet. If it had occurred to him! . . .

Dasha understood. Was she afraid, she wondered. If you're afraid, don't go out into the rapid current, keep to the quiet backwaters. . . . And she silently answered her own thought: This is what I want. And no longer thinking of her own numbed feet, she reached out and carefully fastened Seryozha's coat, tucking his scarf warmly round his thin neck.

That told him everything.

It was difficult for Seryozha to push aside his troubled thoughts that day. He knew these were not the words in which to ask the girl he loved to be his wife. At any other time he would have found better ones. I put it badly, he thought. She'll be offended. She'll want me to do it properly. . . . But she was not offended and wanted nothing more. And it may have been this that made Seryozha realize that nobody could ever be closer to him than Dasha. And he was amazed at how it had all happened.

There had been a big-eyed girl in the moulding shop who'd surprised him by her conscientiousness and Comsomol perseverance. Then there had been a girl to whom one could talk as one did to the grass, or the river, or the sky. Then there had been a scared little creature—funny, but rather sweet, and it had been pleasant to remember now and then that somewhere not far off in the moulding shop there was this touch-me-not who wouldn't let you even hold her hand if you didn't intend to marry her. Then she had come and filled everything with light, like the first snow—her face gleaming pale, defenceless as a child before him yet filled with womanly pride. Then—the dance, when she had been less like a girl than like some wonderful flower—so fragile you were afraid to touch it. But it was only now, when she reached out her arms—not to embrace him, but to protect him from the cold, that he knew with all his being that this was his wife, part of himself. He took her chilled hands and smiled.

"May I hold your hands now, Dasha?—Remember, how you said, 'If you're not going to marry a girl, don't hold hands with her?' He bent over her and said slowly, in that deep, low voice she had wanted to hear, "I do want to marry you. I'd marry you tomorrow! Now may I hold your hand?"

She raised her head and he felt her warm breath. He had often kissed girls, not because he particularly sought it but because they seemed to expect it. And in the back of his mind there had always lurked a certain apprehension—suppose she took it seriously? Now, for the first time, there was no apprehension or caution. Love, life, his whole heart—he knew he could trust them to her, she would never soil or injure them. Everything in him was open to her. And there was nothing left but Dasha.

And Dasha understood. She needed no lights, no music. It was quite right the way it was—with the snow-storm, the rasping of metal, the half-obliterated scheme of the cutting tools in the snow at her feet, and Seryozha's weariness, and the bitterness of his disappointment, and the eager joy of his seeking thoughts.

## *TRUST*

Bakhirev finished his night shift and at seven went to the experimental department. He loved that empty shop in the early morning, when the industrious machines were asleep and only his own talked confidentially to him with its level, kindly hum. This was the hour when he was alone with it, the child of his brain now embodied in metal. "Seven's my hour," he told Tina, smiling. "At seven in the morning I go to my machine, and at seven in the evening—to you." He hurried impatiently to both. In the morning he passed a careful, almost caressing hand over the smooth, cold surface of the heavy, dark-red metal clamps; when a piece of metal contains in itself so much mental turmoil, hard work and aspiration, it becomes like some living, deeply loved creation. And in the evenings he gripped Tina's fragile shoulders and love became heavy and bright like a bar of machined metal.

At nine the shop filled with people and Bakhirev had to give up the testing stand. He was delighted with the way the tests were going. The improved design was showing its advantages with every day.

His spirits raised by its even hum, he left the shop. The morning was misty with frost. The red sun, a rayless disc, rose beyond the far bank. Pinkish mist floated upwards like a hymn to the glory of the morning. Solid-looking shadows laid themselves on the firm, rosy snow. The ruts were etched in sharp blue lines. With every step the hard, dry snow crunched underfoot.

Bakhirev made his way to the foundry. Sagurov and Vasili Vasilyevich had asked him to come and take a look at the second sandblast which they couldn't get working to their satisfaction, and talk over the new multi-pattern set-up.

It was a week since Bakhirev had been in the foundry. He was surprised to realize that he had missed it. It was not his shop. Yes, but nevertheless, all that was happening there concerned him. Tiny roots in their growth catch up, grip and hold a clod of soil and stones. Bakhirev felt himself caught and held by the roots of new ways, new ideas growing here in the foundry. And the workers there too looked upon him as one of their own. Olga Stepanovna came to him to complain.



"It's a disgrace, Dmitri Alexeyevich, they've sent poor quality sand again. And the measuring hoppers are getting choked."

He could not go on without giving his advice about the measuring hoppers. Sagurov beamed at the sight of him.

"We've been waiting for you to come!" He gestured widely towards the index board. "Two per cent over the plan! What d'you say to that?"

Proudly he waited for a word of praise, just as though Bakhirev were still chief engineer.

"I don't know the general position now," he said with a smile. "The only thing I can say is that so far as parts for the engine shop are concerned, the foundry night shift have done a good job."

This was not quite the truth. He could not regard the foundry simply from the point of view of parts for the engine shop.

Dasha came up while he was discussing the sandblast.

"Good morning, Dmitri Alexeyevich. The core-makers are wondering whether there'll be sandblasts all through our shop?"

He dropped his eyes and pictured the structure of sandblasts. He was no longer chief engineer and was not responsible for the foundry. Why was it so difficult to tell her that for the present, only two sandblasts were planned. But that was only for the present. Later on, of course. . . . And without raising his eyes he answered, "The whole shop, Dasha."

He was not rid of her so easily, however.

"When'll it be?"

He could only turn it off with a joke. "You'd do better to tell me when I'll be invited to the wedding. Why, you've got quite grown up! Have you decided on the lucky man yet?"

She flushed up so brightly that Bakhirev and Sagurov and the motor-rulley driver busy loading cores all burst out laughing.

Still chuckling, he glanced round and saw a slender brown throat rising from a blue overall close to him, behind a machine. Tina! For some reason the laughter stopped. Tina turned and blushed crimson. With head and hand she made some kind of sign. He went up to her.

"What is it?"

"No, Dmitri—I mean, why did you come? . . . No, I only wanted to tell you to turn away, not to look at me."

"Why?"

"But my dear, the way you look . . . everything's written there on your face. . . . They all stopped talking, even." But her own eyes were on his face as though they could not leave it. "You've got thin. Why is that? What's the matter?"

They had not seen one another for two days and now, meeting suddenly like this in the foundry, they tasted a kind of bitter joy. They gazed at each other eagerly, discovering anew all the best, most loved traits that they had so often pictured in loneliness. They both discerned with an inner tremor every change of expression implanted by these days. When they were apart, they did not ven-

ture even to mention one another's names, they plunged into two different, completely sundered worlds, and because of this, every hour away from each other grew to an eternity, and every meeting was like a return from some dangerous journey to another planet.

Chubasov joined them. "Come with me, Dmitri Alexeyevich, I've good news for you."

He turned and went. Bakhirev fixed a time with Tina when they should meet, and followed. What good news could there be for him now?

For some reason the encounter in the foundry troubled Chubasov. Ukhanov had once said jokingly that it was the technologist Karamysh who brought the former chief engineer so often to the foundry. Chubasov had only frowned and taken it for one of the many bits of gossip which busy tongues had woven round the rather noticeable personality of Bakhirev. Why should he have remembered it just now?

After all, what had happened? Nothing at all. He had held her hand—well, you could take a person's hand for a dozen reasons. But that look on his face, happy and—intoxicated. And she—how she'd looked at him! Fear, and something like devotion, adoration. . . . But no, it was all imagination. He'd got a family . . . children. He was a serious, sensible man. And everybody said he was an excellent husband and father, too.

When Bakhirev entered with his usual heavy, measured step, and turned his narrow, deep-set eyes on Chubasov, and spoke in his usual businesslike way, Chubasov sighed with relief. Of course—just imagination. A serious, sensible man.

"Excellent news," he said. "In three days you're to go to Moscow with your counterbalances."

Bakhirev turned so sharply in his surprise that his chair creaked.

"Me? I'm to go?"

"Of course—you."

"But Valgan?"

"He's had to swallow it. Had to knuckle under to the majority in the Party committee."

"Maybe we'd better go together—eh? After all, I was taken off my job."

"Rubbish, you're not a kid! We've an important meeting the day after tomorrow. We really oughtn't to have let you go, either. But it happened that way."

Bakhirev could guess what it must have cost Chubasov to get him sent—him, the ex-chief engineer, the man taken off the job. His hand rose to tug at his hair. Chubasov smiled.

"What do you do that for? I've wanted to ask you for a long time. Trying to scalp yourself as a punishment for something? Or pulling your brains up to a higher level?"

"My brains, my brains," said Bakhirev and quietly, gratefully he rumbled, "Thank you."

Chubasov's sable brows drew together.

"What's the thanks for? You think it's you I'm worrying about? It's the works. Tell me, rather, whether those counterbalances of yours are all they ought to be. Will you be able to prove it to the Ministry? You won't fall down on it?"

"The design's all right. The tests prove it. The advantages are obvious. Got to change over. Before spring. Before the sowing season. Most of the tractors are in for overhauling now, that's why there isn't any trouble with the counterbalances. But when spring comes they'll all start flying off again. That's clear as daylight."

Their talk was of factory affairs, but when Bakhirev rose to go, Chubasov again glanced at his hair, smoothly combed in front with the sudden wild tufts at the back, and following some vague intuition, found himself saying, as though in passing, "The sports club has got some new skis, don't you want any for your family? By the way, you may not know it, but those children of yours have helped their father in a tough spot."

"My children have helped me?" Bakhirev repeated, bewildered.

"They certainly have! People like them, they're nice kids. It isn't everyone knows what you're really made of yet, our folks are still watching and waiting. But the family you've got, couldn't wish for a better one. And that makes people trust you. People like a good family man."

All this was said casually, as though expressing a chance thought.

Suddenly Bakhirev's left brow rose, a sharp, understanding spark came into his eyes, and there was a hint of a smile round his mouth.

"I doubt if people judge a man's qualities as an engineer just by his qualities as a family man," he said and changed the subject. "I'm going to the lab. I've got to prepare some technical reports."

He turned and went.

Not a significant word had been uttered, yet Chubasov's inner ear could catch an unspoken dialogue: "Is that a warning?" "Yes, it is." "And who are you to be forcing your warnings on me?"

Had he imagined it? Chubasov wondered again. Oh, to hell with it—you could start having hallucinations with this "shaggy hippopotamus" of an engineer.

Bakhirev prepared report after report until the figures swam before his eyes. Sleepless nights were having their effect.

He went home and lay down; he could not sleep but for half an hour he managed a kind of broken doze. His over-stimulated brain would not rest, a phantasmagoria of pictures passed before his closed eyes—the counterbalances, Tina, Chubasov, Moscow, the foundry. It was quiet in the dimly-lit room. Katya had recently worried less. After her husband was made shift engineer instead of chief engineer, the neighbours became much more friendly and sympathetic. The Roslavlevs asked her in, and she firmly adopted their point of view—that Bakhirev's fall was only temporary. She was more troubled now by her husband's inner estrangement. His life had always been lived outside the range of hers, and for a long time she had regarded this as the natural thing. But among her new friends she found a different relationship; all of them, old and young, shared



a common interest in the factory, it was the major part of their lives. The Roslavlevs made her see Bakhirev from a different aspect. She had always taken it for granted that he simply did his job conscientiously, just as she had done hers when she worked at the cash-desk in the department store. That was something she could quite well understand. But the Roslavlevs talked about his struggle, his courage, his talents and firm principles.

She believed them, and she was afraid. In all these years she had never seen, let alone understood, the very things that his best friends valued and loved in him. There were times when she almost felt she was living with a stranger. She tried to calm herself—after all, it wasn't absolutely necessary that the whole family should be at the works. What a busy man liked best was a simple, domestic woman who knew how to keep herself attractive and give him a comfortable life.

So she tried to be as attractive as possible and cushion him with comforts. But it made no impression. Perhaps what was right for others was wrong for him? Perhaps in this too she had failed to understand the man with whom she had lived for seventeen years?

She heard when he wakened, went in and sat down beside him on the sofa, taking his hand in hers.

"You don't seem to miss me a bit when I'm not here," she said.

He turned away, pressed her hand and then dropped it.

"I get very tired, Katya. . . . You don't know what the work's like."

The need to lie, the impossibility of telling her the thing that was the essence of his life weighed heavily on him; even her very presence was hard to endure.

She sat for a moment, sighed and went to the door—tall, perfumed, in a velvet house-robe. A thick plait lay along her sturdy back.

"Rest, then, if you're tired," she said and gently closed the door.

"Tired!" In a moment he would rise. Avoiding passers-by, slinking secretly among the snow-drifts, he would walk two kilometres in the darkness to the neighbouring housing estate to embrace passionately that thin, weary girl with the sunburned neck and cropped hair smelling of metal and smoke.

Bakhirev wanted Tina to see him off at the station, but Katya, hoping to lessen the gap between herself and her husband, decided on a family send-off. This turned out to be fortunate, for a factory delegation to Stalingrad was leaving by the same train, and the platform was full of familiar faces.

Looking round at the station, Bakhirev suddenly recalled the day when he had arrived with Valgan. Everything had been new and strange—every column, every street and square, even the smile on Valgan's face. Well, there was nothing unknown now. Everything was clear. What was this town to him? The town that contained Tina and the counterbalances that tore loose? No, not only that. It had become a town containing many tried friends and a few implacable enemies.

He put his suitcase down in the compartment and came out again to join his wife and children on the platform. Friends and strangers looked at them, and

no wonder, for the children were a picture. Slender little Anya whose open face had her mother's features, in her blue coat with the squirrel collar and a coloured hair-ribbon peeping out from under her fluffy cap, was just at the age when a child begins to grow up. Bakhirev looked at her with tremulous affection. The tender beauty of a flower arouses both joy and a sad thought of the swift flight of time. Ryzhik, in his fur cap and grey coat that made him look bigger and broader, was absurdly like Bakhirev—not so much in his separate features as in the whole form and expression of his obstinate face. The most attractive of all was Chubby, stamping along between brother and sister in his red cap and warm baggy red trousers, so smiling and yet so important that one smiled at the look of him. The three of them walked along the platform holding hands, now and then glancing at their parents.

Katya took Bakhirev's arm, proud to have so many people from the tractor works see them in all their family glory.

"When you get to Moscow you'll make them see you're right, won't you, Dad?" asked Ryzhik in his new bass voice.

"Chubby, put your cap straight," said Anya in habitual sisterly reminder. "Dad, come over here, look, they're dancing."

A circle of young people had formed and in the centre Sinenky was comically taking the girl's part in a Russian dance, fluttering a handkerchief. Bakhirev looked to see whether Tina was among those who had come with the delegation. There was no sign of her. He badly wanted to talk to her about the things that filled his mind—the journey, the Ministry, the counterbalances, and Chubasov's friendship and help.

"Whom are you looking for?" asked Katya, following his eyes.

"A pity Chubasov's not here," he lied.

"He thinks a lot of himself these days. I met him yesterday and he hardly looked at me. Even Ukhanov always bows."

Bakhirev wanted to grind his teeth. Tina, he thought, Tina! If only she were here, beside him. Before they had come to be so close, Katya's chatter had seemed the normal thing, he had wanted nothing better. But now whenever he tried to talk to her it either set his teeth on edge or gave him the feeling of dragging his feet through a bog.

A mother having trouble with a fractious little boy said, "Look, how nicely those children behave!"

"If only they were always as good as this," sighed Katya and suddenly stopped. "Anya, look, that's your Vitya! What's the matter with him?"

A tousle-headed boy slouched aimlessly down the platform with dragging steps. The buttons of his coat were in the wrong holes, pulling it askew, and his unfastened bootlaces trailed in the snow. He saw Anya but did not greet her. Anya turned away.

"Have you quarrelled?" asked Katya in surprise.

"Oh, bother him. . . . I don't want—"

Bakhirev's eyes searched his daughter's reddened face.

"What's happened, Anya?"

"He's got like that—horrid. A rough bully. . . . His father left him."

From the angry contempt in her tone, one might have thought the boy had been caught in something shameful—lying or stealing. Bakhirev felt every muscle go tense, but he tried to keep his tone casual.

"Well, and what if his father has left him?"

"Oh, can't you see? He goes about like that, grumpy . . . cross . . . with his bootlaces trailing, sort of . . . a sort of walking misery."

"But if he's a walking misery, does that mean you mustn't speak to him?" Bakhirev insisted, wondering at the cruelty of children.

"But if he'd been nice, nobody'd have left him." Anya raised her chin stubbornly, convinced of the irrefutability of her logic.

"He used to be a decent fellow. But now he's gone all queer," Ryzhik supported her. "And they're all like that, all miserable. His mother and granny shout and yell and then start crying like babies, they go on like that all day. And Vitya, he's the same, first he starts fighting and then he stands shaking and shaking. . . ."

To these children who had grown up in a healthy atmosphere and had never heard their parents quarrel, the unhappiness of this broken family was something horrible.

They had not the slightest idea how many times in that year they had been on the verge of becoming "walking miseries." For an instant Bakhirev pictured what would have happened to them if he had gone to Tina. Ryzhik—angry and bitter, abandoned, the mainspring taken from his life, peculiarly miserable, peculiarly set apart among animated, happy people. . . . Even the thought was unbearable. Bakhirev straightened his son's hat. Ryzhik sensed his father's emotion and looked round at him.

"What is it, Dad?"

"No, nothing, it's all right." He touched the hat again. "There, that's better."

Ryzhik flushed under his father's caressing hand, and Chubby squealed, "Mine too, mine too!" Even reserved Anya laid her frost-whitened head for a moment against her father's shoulder, jealous of the affection shown to Ryzhik.

Bakhirev felt a sharp pang of guilt, could he shatter their happiness for the sake of his own? And would there be any for him if he did? Could he be happy, knowing of their misery?

"Come along, children, let's go to the refreshment room for tea and cakes."

It made him both happy and ashamed to see the joy he could give with one phrase to these four human beings whose trust in him was so complete.

They barely had time to swallow a cup of tea before the warning bell sounded. Bakhirev climbed the coach steps and stood there, his wife and children on the platform beside him.

"Don't worry about us, Dad," said Ryzhik, "We'll be quite all right. You get your counterbalances accepted!"



From the top step they looked very small. Could he cast that trio, so warm and helpless, out into the frost, into the thick of a world busily hurrying about its own affairs?

The "walking misery" Vitya trailed along the platform like a warning.

The train raced through a clean, snow-covered countryside. Bakhirev stood by the window, watching the telegraph wires, furry with hoar-frost, running past against the background of blue sky. Virgin snow, gleaming with an icy covering where frost had followed thaw, stretched to the horizon. A fir-tree, its trunk warmly red, stood on a rise like the spirit of Christmas dominating the snowy tablecloth. Bakhirev remembered the collective farm he visited and envied the people he met there. To be in that pure whiteness the whole day. To live in and for such a world. What more did a disinterested, hard worker need? Snow, sky, and the red trunk of a fir-tree on a rise. And Tina. Without her it would be like the landscape without that fir-tree. And again his thoughts ran between their accustomed poles—Tina and Ryzhik. And then he saw the desolate, angry look of the boy on the platform, his trailing bootlaces.

Broken youth is no youth. Didn't he know? Dirt, smells, thick, drunken speech. For the first time he realized that his trouble of today was the result of his own mutilated childhood. He had grown up amidst drunken brawls, with curses and tears, with smashed dishes and torn, dirty rags, and to him ordinary, dull quietness had seemed the essence of all happiness. The absence of tears and curses, plates unbroken, clean table napkins had been the height of human well-being, and she who presided over these blessings its good genius. And so he donned fetters. Now his spirit sought that for which it was formed—not quietness but the rumble of efficiently-working shops, not plates or napkins but surging powers and space for their expanding development. His whole being was made for irresistible movement, but he was lapped in this napkined quietness. Somewhere inside him the forces of the past wrestled with those of the future, and he writhed and groaned, clamped in their grip. Whom could he blame? What could he demand of those two drink-sodden alcoholics who were themselves spewed up by the past and mutilated a child without knowing what they did? But he knew what he was doing. He knew by his own experience that a ruined childhood would have its effect in one way or another. If the child's leg is broken, the man may limp all his life. Could he break both of Ryzhik's legs?

For the hundredth time his thoughts trod the familiar path, for the hundredth time he knew he could not doom his children to the loss of their childhood. But he knew, too, that he could not help longing for Tina. Before he came to know her he had looked upon his family life as the usual one. A child born in a northern skin tent accepts its stuffiness, and sleeping in a crowd, and the smoky seal-fat lamp, and never washing as the natural thing. But suppose when he grows up he comes to study at Moscow University, gets used to a spacious reading room, to electric light, to clean bedding, to soap and hot water? Can he return for the rest of his life to the stuffy tent and smoky lamp? No, he will return in order to build new houses, libraries, bath-houses and power stations. His only thought will be that nobody should ever again spend their lives in skin tents.

Bakhirev could no longer conceive of intimacy with a woman without spiritual closeness, without that deep echo which returns every thought, every feeling enriched a hundredfold and touches life with glory. He could no longer do without it and wondered that anyone could. After knowing Tina, intimacy without that spiritual closeness seemed horrible in its emptiness.

He hardly thought now about the counterbalances. As far as they were concerned everything was clear and could be demonstrated. He did not doubt that the Ministry, seeing his report, his blueprints, would also see that they were indisputable.

Two days later Bakhirev drove in the early morning through the dark, snow-swept streets of Moscow. There was already a crowd of arrivals in the vestibule of the Moskva Hotel. Too impatient to wait for his turn, he picked up his suitcase and papers and hurried straight to the Ministry. After all, he might not need a hotel at all. Get Bochkaryev's signature and straight back with the next train. Or fly, if the weather was right.

Bochkaryev, the deputy minister, well known to tractor-builders, was away. Bakhirev was told his question would be settled in the proper department. There the chief designer sent him to the department chief, where a secretary told him his question had been sent back to the minister.

After this run-around, Bakhirev found himself at last in the waiting room of the second deputy minister, Belovodov.

People were sitting on the broad sofa, waiting to be called in. Now, when the decision already lay in the hands of the deputy minister, every hour's delay was like a crime; for every hour tractors doomed to a breakdown were leaving the conveyor. His common sense told him, however, that after all these months, another hour would make little difference. He opened his folder and glanced again at his report and blueprints; they calmed him as usual.

Those blueprints showed that lucid simplicity of construction which Bakhirev loved. With the first glance the efficiency of the design leaped to the eye, and this gave Bakhirev confidence in the outcome of his trip. He did not realize that not everybody has an inborn sense of design. It is a special gift, and it is as difficult to explain such things to those who do not possess that gift as it would be to explain why one combination of sounds is harmonious and another not, to a person with no ear for music.

Bakhirev, with his innate sense of design, took it for granted that other people must possess it too. It never entered his head that anybody could fail to understand a thing so clear to himself. So after a comforting glance at his blueprints, he settled down to a semi-doze of waiting.

In the small, modestly furnished office he found a small, thin man with a slack-skinned face and the movements of a man large and fat. He held his sharp-featured face with its small eyes and contemptuously compressed mouth tilted up at an angle, as though supported by a double chin and a thick neck.

He was speaking through the telephone as Bakhirev came in; he continued for some time and turned his attention reluctantly to his visitor.

"Well?" said Belovodov, as though asking. "After all your fuss, your letters, you've got your way, you're here, what more do you want?"

Bakhirev noticed the tone, but he was busy spreading out his plans and blueprints. He had brought the ace of trumps. And when they were all laid on the desk he said as laconically as Belovodov, "There."

"What's all this?"

"The old design and the new. It's all down here."

The deputy minister's fingers slid over the blueprints and turned the pages of the statement. Then he made a queer movement of hands and shoulders and turned his sharp eyes sideways on Bakhirev, as though he had difficulty in moving his head.

"How many hours have you tested them?"

With the first question Bakhirev sensed an inexplicable hostility. But that did not worry him; he had not come to seek sympathy, he had come to get the new design accepted. And the value of the design was obvious.

"A thousand hours."

Belovodov frowned as much as to say, "Just as I expected." He glanced at the blueprints again, then his eyes bored into his visitor.

Belovodov had heard a great deal about Bakhirev. He had heard of him as an engineer who had begun making trouble the moment he came to the works; from the first month he had obstructed the programme and disorganized things to such an extent that the works was still paying for it with those counterbalances. He had been taken off the job with all dispatch but for some queer reason of his own had stayed at the works as shift engineer and started bombarding everybody with letters, demanding nothing more or less than the complete stoppage of production until his new design was introduced. All this smelled of irresponsible self-advertisement. The fuss about the new design was an obvious attempt to shuffle out of responsibility by laying the blame on a structural defect, and so get off scot free. This was the picture of Bakhirev given by Valgan and many other people who Belovodov knew well. And his own impression confirmed it. This shift engineer—morose, shaggy-headed, dusty and creased from his journey, bursting into the office with folders as creased as his clothes, did not inspire confidence. His self-assurance accorded ill with his position as shift engineer, with the business that had brought him and with his own appearance. An upstart, an adventurer, thought Belovodov. Managed somehow to get the job of chief engineer, made a mess of it, and now he's looking for a loophole.

"A thousand hours," he repeated Bakhirev's words. "Do you happen to know the law? It lays down a guarantee period of not less than two thousand."

"But in practice that would mean another three months intensive work, at the very least."

"I asked you, do you know the law? Why do you bring drawings and figures not yet properly checked?"

"The design speaks for itself. . . . Look. You haven't even examined it. Tests have shown that this structure is eleven times stronger. But you can see it with the first glance. Look!"



This man was even more impudent than Belovodov had expected. He quite understood Valgan's indignation.

"I ask you, Comrade Bakhirev, do you know the law? Who gave you the right to insist on the mass production of a design which has not passed the period of testing the law requires?"

"And I answer you the second time," Bakhirev flared up, "that the design speaks for itself. If you're going to test everything before you can have an opinion, you don't need to be an engineer. You can be a watchman!"

The very rudeness of this man aroused curiosity; rudeness was a thing seldom heard in that office.

"Why a watchman?"

"After tests are made, even a watchman can see what's good and what isn't. But an engineer ought to be able to feel, to understand, to judge a design."

"Really? I'm learning something." Belovodov mocked.

Bakhirev realized he must control himself and try to convince this man.

"The situation's disastrous. Every day we're sending hundreds of tractors to the fields that are no good."

"The situation *was* disastrous. That is absolutely right. In the spring you turned the works into Bedlam! You were removed. Now the technology is changed, and since then there are no faulty counterbalances. But you still keep on making trouble. What is your object?"

Bakhirev felt as though he were being accused. But of what?

"My object?" Bakhirev repeated. "One single object—to prevent breakdowns on a mass scale. Because this season or the next there'll be mass failure of the counterbalances. It's necessary to change the design at once in both works and remove all the counterbalances of the old type from the tractors already sent out!"

"Do you understand what you're saying?" Belovodov asked quietly. "To stop two works! To change the counterbalances on thousands of tractors scattered all over the Soviet Union! To do that we'd have to have the joint agreement and sanction of several ministries. And you want all this done on the basis of these—scraps of paper? When you haven't fulfilled the elementary testing conditions?"

"But you can see it yourself! You can see it!" Bakhirev cried in agony, pointing at the blueprints.

"What can I see? I can see disgraceful carelessness. I can see that even the corners of your folders are dog's-eared and creased. I can see things dashed off in a hurry without proper thought. I will go further—in all this business I see irresponsible self-advertisement."

At last Bakhirev realized what he was in Belovodov's eyes. Those eyes had read the letters and statements sent by Valgan and his friends. But they had not seen the smashed tractors by the factory gate. What could he do? Bakhirev looked about him desperately, seeking support, a way out. Well-made cupboards filled with books and exponents there for show. Photographs behind shiny glass on the walls. From the point of view of this glassed-in well-being Bakhirev himself, and his haste, and the counterbalances hovering over him, and the crippled

tractors were something far away, and unimportant. But had anyone the right to judge only from the glass-and-paper point of view? Could you push life with all its struggle and complexity into a cupboard?

While his thoughts raced, Belovodov was telephoning. Stalingrad rang up, then Chelyabinsk. Was it the same thing with them, Bakhirev wondered—paper, glass, the telephone? The complex life of a tremendously expanded production could not be confined in this room. All that entered was its paper and telephone reflection.

"I can quite understand," said Bakhirev when Belovodov laid down the receiver. "Seen from here failure of counterbalances is just a small episode and my persistence is—well, irresponsible. But if only you could see the smashed tractors as I have, instead of just papers!"

This adventurer was more dangerous than he had appeared. He was playing the strongest card—the man-on-the-spot. Belovodov well knew that type of engineer who made play with his dirty hands and worn top-boots. There were plenty of them, men who regarded Belovodov's ministerial office as a kind of appendix, or even a tumour, and themselves as the brains of the whole thing. Belovodov was sure that in reality they simply envied that office, and the car, and all the appurtenances of a Moscow ministry. Their critical attitude arose from that self-same envy. Offer one of them—not even a private office in a ministry, but just some soft seat, and he'd sit down on it with the greatest delight, and remain sitting. And since that galaxy weren't offered even a seat, they tried to clear out the office itself.

"I understand. I understand all you want to say. 'The Ministry has lost contact with the works.' An old song."

"What I want to say is that there are a great many of those works. To avoid paper leadership, Ministry officials need special qualities. About you I don't know, but I know that Bochkaryev possesses them. I ask that my question be handed to him when he returns."

This was another piece of tactlessness. Here, Belovodov realized, was the kind of man to go complaining to all possible offices and persons. A stop must be put to that, and at once.

"Bochkaryev isn't the only one who knows the works, others do as well." He rose. "We in the Ministry know and understand more than you think, Comrade Bakhirev. We know that you dislocated the technological processes and brought the factory to the brink of catastrophe, and now you try to put the blame on the design and evade responsibility."

Bakhirev rose in his turn.

"I am not evading any responsibility. Consider me to blame for the past if you like, judge me and punish me. I came here to talk about the future. About this new design. It is better from the technological point of view, cheaper, and stronger than the one we have now."

"I have already told you, the law forbids any change in mass production without the proper period of testing."

"I'll go to the Party Central Committee," burst from Bakhirev.

Just as I thought, Belovodov said to himself. One of those trouble-makers. Have to stop him before he gets started.

"That's for you to decide. But, I warn you, we have already informed the Central Committee. They have experts' opinions saying that the present construction is efficient and the spoilage came from technological disorders in the works. The Central Committee also knows two decisive considerations: first, that this construction is used in two works, but the counterbalances tear off only in one, and secondly, that the failures occurred mainly in the series put out during Valgan's illness, when you were in full charge. That is not paper, Comrade Bakhirev," and he pushed Bakhirev's papers back at him, "that is a fact! And this fact is known to the Central Committee. Incidentally, I'll ring them up now. Take these with you," and he pushed Bakhirev's blueprints away, "and I advise you not to show your face in the Ministry with those fraudulent documents again. Still less in the Central Committee! Though that's your own business, of course."

He pressed a button and told the secretary, "Send in the next."

Bakhirev hardly knew how to get himself out of the room. The skin of his face felt hot and tight.

He went to the Central Committee building and from the entry rang up the office he needed, for a pass.

"Comrade Bakhirev? Shift engineer at the tractor works? What business, please? Counterbalances? I'm just going out to a factory, I'll be away till the end of the day. Come tomorrow."

Bakhirev, excited and resentful, read haste and harshness into the words. So Belovodov had got in first, rung up and presented his own picture.

He went out and stood by the door. Cars stood parked in a long line by a snow-covered garden. Crowds hurried along the frosty street. Who cared about the shift engineer Bakhirev and his counterbalances? Should he wait till the next day? What was the good? What could happen tomorrow? What could he oppose to experts' opinions and Belovodov's words? Who would he be, in the eyes of anybody in the Central Committee offices? The disgraced, dismissed culprit responsible for accidents and failures, or even an "industrial adventurer"? And what had he to offer? Tests not completed, and papers in creased folders that proved nothing. He had based his hopes on the obvious superiority of the new design. But in the Central Committee offices he would not be talking to a designer, a tractor builder, and his trump card would be useless. Why should he go at all, then? Would it not be wiser to return home as quickly as he could, finish the second thousand hours, and then come again? . . . Where should he go from here—to the hotel or to the station?

A dull weariness from all he had gone through on top of many sleepless nights numbed him. He trailed dully along the streets, feeling nothing of the frost, seeing nothing of the people, heedless of where his feet took him. A car with a chequerboard strip down the sides halted by him for a traffic light. A taxi. He opened the door.



"Where do you want to go?" asked the driver.  
"To the station."

He sent no telegram home to announce his arrival. He could not talk to Katya about all that had happened, nor could he pretend that nothing had happened at all. He went straight to the works by bus. As he got out, he saw Vasili Vasilyevich coming, but fearing questions tried to pretend he had not noticed him. The old man, however, made straight for him, smiling all over his frost-reddened face. He gave his moustaches a twist with that special gesture he reserved for very special moments.

"Well, Dmitri Alexeyevich, congratulations!"

I knew it, thought Bakhirev, they're expecting God knows what.

"Nothing to congratulate me about, Vasili Vasilyevich," he forced out. For some reason the old man looked indignant.

"Nothing? The confidence placed in you—you call that nothing? Trust—that's not something to treat casually. I tell you straight out, you're all wrong . . . wrong . . . wrong. . . ." With a most formal gesture he raised his hat over his head and even scraped the mended heel of his felt boot slightly on the snow. "Good day to you."

Bakhirev knew that this high-society manner was a sign of deep offence. He must have put his foot in it somehow. There was some misunderstanding. But what was it?

"Vasili Vasilyevich!"

The old man turned and gave him the same offended, reproachful look.

"I seem to have said something wrong again. I'm dull and tired after the journey. I'm straight from the train, look, I've even got my suitcase with me. And my trip, there's certainly no cause for congratulations in that."

"But I didn't mean your trip. . . . Or don't you know yet?"

"I don't know anything. I told you, I've come straight from the station."

The old man beamed again, even more broadly than he had at first.

"So I'm the first to tell you? It's always pleasant to meet a man with good news! You've been elected to the Party committee at the works, Dmitri Alexeyevich."

Bakhirev put down his suitcase, he could not take it in all at once.

"So congratulations on your election! It's honour, a trust."

"Me—elected? Yes. . . . Yes, that certainly is good news. Thank you."

Bakhirev's stuttering excitement delighted the old man, and he hastened to give all the details.

"What a meeting that was! They voted twice. Yes—and do you know, the director was *not* elected?"

"Valgan—not elected?!" The pipe almost fell from Bakhirev's mouth. "But what—? How—? Tell me all about it."

They sat down on a bench in a children's playground.

"Eh, what a meeting that was! First of all there was nothing special, everything went along quietly, just as usual. Then during the discussion the workers wanted to hear the complaint against the director sent in by the Comsomol members of the pattern shop. So Chubasov read out the letter, it was about a wrong attitude to chill casting and progressive technique. Then Dronov spoke about it, said the letter showed an unhealthy mood. Well, I couldn't let that go. So up I went to the platform. 'How can you call it unhealthy?' I said. 'If those young folks kept quiet about what's wrong or grumbled in corners, that would be an unhealthy mood. But they're fighting for progress through the Party committee! Through their advance guard! You couldn't find a healthier mood than that.' Osipov backed me up and so did a lot of the others. But Dronov would have it his way. So there was a real argument. Dronov grabbed the letter and said, 'Look, they write that the director talks like a master in the old days, under the tsar, but the tone they write in, you'd think they were the masters themselves.' And that got Kornei Korneyevich up, he asked for the floor at once, without waiting his turn. You can imagine how quiet it was then. It isn't often he gets up, but now—right away! And from him we got a question of principle—all about that word 'master.' Kornei Korneyevich put it this way—if you want the young folks to take a responsible attitude to their work, the attitude of those who know it's their own—the masters, that is, don't blame them if they talk like the master too. That's the spirit, that's our strength, he said. In a word, he got down to rock bottom. And you should have heard how everyone clapped him! After that the director took the floor, but he couldn't say anything special, it was just 'I worked and I'm not valued.' Made things worse. And, then it came to the election, and you were proposed at once. Some were against it. So then there was another fight. Up got the workers from the foundry and the engine shop and the pattern makers too. And I mustn't forget, Chubasov and Grinin supported you. Well, so we got to the voting. Secret voting, and it came out—Bakhirev elected, and Valgan not. That was a real bombshell. Ukhanov objected, said the voting wasn't right, so we voted again, and then a third time, and it was always the same."

Bakhirev chewed on his pipe. So that was what had been happening. While he had stood there by the entrance to the Central Committee building, tired, downcast, alone, they had been fighting for him and his line of action. And who was it that had fought? All, from young lads to grey-bearded old men, not to mention people like Chubasov and Grinin. If he had known that, he would not have left Moscow empty-handed. For a moment he had lost the sense of identity with these people and at once came weakness, confusion, failure. Would he ever be a real man?

He rose. "Thank you, Vasili Vasilyevich. Remember that time I came to you to learn? I'll often have to come again. But there's one good thing you can say about me—I may be a dull pupil but I do try."

Half an hour later he was sitting in a shamefaced huddle before an angry Roslavlev and an infuriated Chubasov.

"What do you think you are?" said Chubasov. "We sent you as a man, an engineer—we sent you as a Communist! And what did you do? You acted like—like—I can't find words for you!"

Bakhirev shifted his shoulders, raised his hand to his tuft of hair but dropped it again.

"Scared off by Belovodov!" Chubasov continued. "Found something to be scared of—took a mangy cat for a tiger! Just a plain coward, that's what you are!"

"It wasn't Belovodov, it was the logic, the arguments. Because he has got arguments, you know. Our counterbalances fly off, but what about those at the other works? They don't! And had the design had the two-thousand-hours test the law demands? No. He's got logic on his side, you can't get away from that. . . . In his eyes I'm just an adventurer, a trickster looking for a hole to slip through."

"Very good," said Chubasov, his voice low with suppressed fury. "But you yourself—are you quite convinced you're not an adventurer and trickster? Or maybe you're not so sure?"

"I'm quite sure," said Bakhirev.

"Then why don't you stand up for yourself? Although actually, of course, it isn't you that matters. It isn't you we've all been worrying about, devil take you! The point is, you insist the present design is wrong and sooner or later there'll be mass failures of the counterbalances."

"I certainly do," said Bakhirev, and pulled his tuft as hard as though he'd made up his mind sooner or later to pull his whole head off, and was just testing its firmness.

Down came Roslavlev's fist with a crash on the table.

"Then why—" and he finished with a round curse.

"A coward," said Chubasov with deadly calm. "Just a plain coward. That's all."

"They spat in his face," boomed Roslavlev, "and he was so scared he didn't even wipe it off! Came running back with his tail between his legs, bringing the spittle with him to the works!"

"How many days do you need to get the necessary second thousand hours?" asked Chubasov.

"If I work the way I've been doing, three or four hours a day, then I'll need almost a year."

"Who told you to work three or four hours? You knew you needed more, why didn't you come to the Party committee and demand it? How about it if the testing's done double shifts? Or twenty hours a day?"

Bakhirev gave a quick glance at the Party organizer's eyes, usually soft and beautiful, but now hard and angry.

"About two months."

Chubasov did not want any of Bakhirev's glances. He turned away.

"That means we've got to organize twenty or even twenty-four hours a day."



He paced up and down the room, trying to calm himself, then stopped by the window with his back to Bakhirev and said, "You forgot the works. But the works didn't forget you. You were elected to the Party committee. People spoke up for you, fought for you. . . . Have you heard about it?"

"Yes. . . ."

"As a Party member you'll work for progressive technique. That's your first Party assignment. This evening there'll be a meeting of the Party committee to discuss the plan of work."

"But I haven't thought it out yet, what to begin with."

"I've thought it out. We'll begin by giving you hell. Got that?"

"I've got it," said Bakhirev with his old submissiveness, looking at the Party organizer's angry back.

### *LOVE IN BACKYARDS*

Dmitri Bakhirev bent to fasten his boots, and that ancient rotting smell rose from beneath the Tekin carpet, the smell of shabby age that impregnated the whole cottage.

Tekin carpets can't make it any better, or Iranian either, he thought. Carpets could not beautify the room, they could only stress its meanness, as a patch of fresh new material shows up the faded shabbiness of a shirt. No, he thought, you can't hide it, or cover it up, or gloss it over. . . . The window opened on to a small backyard; over the half-curtain the tall fence and hump-backed chicken-house loomed darkly. Dmitri rose, and as usual, struck his head against a beam.

"Oh hell! The way they used to build! The fence taller than the house! I like a fence to be open, cheerful, so you can see ducks and geese through it."

"Now isn't that interesting—the kind of fence you like," said Tina with faint irony.

He glanced at her from the tail of his eye. She lay on her back, her arms by her sides outside the quilt. A good little schoolgirl during the rest-hour at a children's summer camp, he thought with an inward grin. "Lie straight, breathe evenly." And the same look on her face, too. But only a few moments ago. . . . Women! Quick-change artists.

Often he had the feeling that at any moment she might rise and go—without a backward glance, without a flicker in the calm expression of her shining eyes that set him at a distance.

With difficulty and with lies he stole those hours for meeting her. Secretly, afraid of being seen, he made his way to this hut, only to find himself faced with an indifference as sharp and cold as November ice. Every time he had first of all to break up this ice with his own hands, thaw it with his own warmth. But then, *afterwards*, he did not regret the effort.

Only a moment ago she was different, but if I relax the "heat transmission" for an instant, she freezes again. Has she no warmth in herself, is it that she simply cannot love?

This independence, this estrangement of hers both exasperated and drew him; it made their closeness a sharper delight. He became rougher, greedier with her, his need of her increased and with growing frequency he remembered his father, remembered how after a few drinks he would sit for hours stroking his wife's face and hair, murmuring tender words, "My loveliest one, my own. . . ." But if she once ventured to stir the tender murmur would change to an irate shout of "Keep still!" And Dmitri, in his hours with Tina, felt somewhere deep within him those words that began in tenderness and ended in a shout—"My own, my own. . . . Keep still!" A real woman, he thought, ought to be as secure and unchanging as the earth. . . .

An involuntary thought of his wife made him say, "Some women grow so much part of a man that if they were torn away they would bleed to death and die."

Tina caught the allusion.

"The same can be said of a tumour," she answered coldly.

She began to dress; she showed no shame at dressing in front of him, but her face was so much that of a stranger that he felt he had to turn away. As for her, she seemed to have forgotten he was there.

What was she thinking about? What were the thoughts, beyond his control, that passed in ordered procession behind that smooth, round brow?

She sighed faintly, allowed her calm, rather sad glance to travel over the room, coming to rest at last on the crumpled pillow, and said with a faint tinge of mockery, "This, it seems, is all that is left to us."

Her shoulders were as brown as though she had just come from the beach in summer.

He turned round to her. "And for you it's too little?"

"Of course."

The more one-sided their love became, the stronger, sharper and bitterer became that one exaggerated aspect of it. It was as though he were striving through an overwhelming emotion to compensate in his mature years for his arid youth.

He glanced at his watch. Ten minutes left. He gripped her shoulders.

"Foolish one! Liking, friendship and all the rest of it—that's something that comes with time. But this that draws us to each other, this—this—" he broke off, breathing heavily.

"Well? This what?" she asked with the same shade of lofty irony.

He dropped her shoulders and with a forced laugh at his own words before he spoke them, he answered, "This—is a gift of the gods."

"Strange gifts your gods make you."

"And yours? Yours don't make you any. So you can thank mine. It's mine that are giving you everything. Who took you away from everything and every-one that time in the country? Who seeks you through the works? Who thaws this icicle?" Jokingly he put his hands round her throat. "Speak, you cold-blooded fish! What have your gods given you?"

"Let me go . . . I'll tell you." She freed her neck. "Mine have given me this," her hands slid over his face. "They have given me you."

There was such deep tenderness in the words that he found nothing to say. With one sentence she could melt everything within him.

"You say you look for me. But I waited half an hour for you today in the passage."

"Why?"

"The door was open, I could hear you talking to Ukhanov."

"He said I was using Party control as a cover to interfere in things that aren't my concern."

"But what can you do, if he neglects them himself?"

He remembered his wife's words, "Dmitri, don't interfere, let them do as they like. . . ." He longed for something very special to say to Tina.

She removed a cockroach from the wall, her face twisted with revulsion. He felt ashamed not to be able to find a better place for their love, and tried to hide his shame in irony.

"The socialist age isn't planned for convenient adultery. Take capitalism—if you've the money, everything's there for you—hotels, private houses, information and even faked documents—you can buy anything. But try something like that in our day! No privately rented flats, you can't move a step without the housing committee and the house manager. And at hotels you have to show your passports. . . . Not a chance anywhere!"

Her hands dropped and she stood, thoughtful. Then she turned to him, her face serious, tired.

"Socialist people aren't built for adultery either. And to be concrete, we aren't built for it. . . . Do you know that?"

"Yes."

Then they sat, silent, motionless, oblivious to the rustle of cockroaches and the creaking of the shutters.

"I've been thinking about that," Tina continued. "Frivolous romances, the kind Maupassant wrote about, are no good for us, we're not interested in them. They're cheap. We're used to great inner values. . . . That's the essence of our lives, that's what fills them. But great emotions. . . . They're always dangerous if there is no possibility for their natural development. If a torrent is not allowed to follow its natural channel, it can spread destruction. What is great demands careful handling. And anyone who neglects that care—" She stopped.

"What happens?" he prompted her.

"That one must be prepared to pay for it."

"To pay—how? With what?"

She was thinking aloud. "The happiness of others? Or one's own love?"

"One's own love?"

"You can say what you like, but that," and she pointed to the bed, "is too little for us. You remember how it all began? Why we came to love each other? There was so much that was tremendous, difficult, absorbing, and we were in it all together. A great love must have great space to breathe. . . . Love in backyards isn't for us."



Both pondered over what had happened to this love of theirs. Still great, it was becoming day by day more one-sided, and uglier.

Tina loved him for the integrity of his nature, but she always saw him torn in two. She loved him for his firm principles, yet every meeting was against those principles. She loved him for his honesty, but saw him entangled in lies. She loved him for his turbulent, seething life in which only recently she had participated, but she was falling farther and farther away from that life, shut off from it by the walls of this hut.

He had been enchanted by the clarity, courage and activity of her nature, refreshing as a cool spring, but now he usually saw her tired and sad. In spite of her powers of endurance, she was more exhausted with every day. Her work, and the house, and Volodya—a sick man who needed constant care—and then these secret meetings on top of all, drained her physical strength. But the weariness of her spirit was even greater. For the spirit, like the body, can become wilted and numb from a stooping, cramped, unnatural position. That weary numbness which Bakhirev took for coldness began to crush her energy, her stimulating irony, her lively interest in everything around her.

Day by day they were losing in each just that which they most loved.

They understood it, and the bitterness of realization made them quiet.

He roused himself and tried to encourage her.

"People love in different ways. When one lover is weaker than the other, the first submits and everything is smooth and rather dull. But we are equals. That's why our love is what it is. It'll go through fire and water but still it grows, our love, in spite of everything."

A mocking blue eye peeped out from behind a tress of hair.

"Excellent," she said. "It's interesting to see how the ape develops into the man."

"What do you mean?"

"If we leave out the flights of our early days, you've learned to talk quite eloquently in these few months on the theme of love. . . . By the time I'm a hundred you'll be writing something resembling poems to me."

She laughed—a laugh that hurt, a laugh cold and sharp like icicles falling from a height.

"Poems are like flowers, they need warmth," said Bakhirev. "Only lichen would grow in the temperature you give out. Why is it you get like this? You're so warm and wonderful, and then all of a sudden you freeze. They've even noticed it at the works. Sagurov called you an iceberg. How've you got so hard—young, beautiful as you are?"

"Even Mother used to call me Tina the Icicle. But what made me hard—don't you really know?"

"What about?"

"About me. . . . About what happened in the past. . . . Everybody knows at the works. I put it in all the questionnaire forms."

"What past do you mean? And I haven't seen the questionnaire forms. I'm not in the personnel department."

"My first husband was shot as an enemy of the people. I lost both husband and son. . . . My unborn son. A miscarriage. That's why I'm barren now. Barren. Hasn't anybody ever told you?"

"Who'd tell me if you don't? But you—why didn't you ever say anything?" She thought for a moment.

"Why talk about sad things? Good-bye—till the next time."

She kissed him and went to the door. They never left together, for fear of meeting somebody from the works, but now he wanted to go with her.

"Tina!"

Again he saw her wild dark face, the broad Tatar cheekbones and the calm, courageous Russian eyes. He remembered how Alexeyev had said about her, "Russian with a drop of Tatar is doubly Russian."

She waved her hand and vanished.

He sat there, lost, longing for her. It was often like that. She came, she exasperated him with her independence, her estrangement, and as soon as she went he longed for her. But today this longing would not let him rest, and not daring to follow her, he paced the room, colliding with the scuffed chairs. Never a word, he thought, never a hint. I was driven frantic by rents in tractors—but here, beside me, was my woman with a rent in her heart. . . . And I never guessed!

Now he understood that mingling of apparently irreconcilable qualities—kindness of heart and harshness of judgement, frankness and reserve, the open confidence of a child and the cool irony of a person steeled by bitter experience.

He could see now the courageous endurance that lay behind her cold calm. Who else could enter into all the details of his life without ever once intruding her own sorrow? Who else could rise at six, tend a sick husband, come to the shop and work till evening—boldly, calmly breaking down old ways, switching the shop on to a new course, and then in the darkness of evening come here to him, respond to his caresses, with tender irony endure his roughness and exasperation, demanding nothing of him and finding wisdom and strength to transform everything inside him with a couple of words, raising and ennobling all that took place? And then, to get to the other end of the town by tram, and work, and cook, and mend, and go to bed long after midnight, to rise with the dawn and start the whole round over again. And still be gentle, tender and quiet. Who could do all that? Tina could.

Who had ever loved him so devotedly, selflessly? His wife? But she had barely confessed her feelings, and already she demanded his care—marriage, a family, comfort. He gave her everything a man is expected to give his wife. Everything but love. . . . Now she was sitting in a comfortable apartment with her children round her, calm, provided for. But Tina? Exhausted by her work and his love, she was making her way home through the frost on one of the infrequent trams. He had accused her of coldness, whereas she was simply worn out with care, work and these night journeys, with lies, with pretence, with love in backyards. How would she get home now, in the cold, in the blizzard? He must overtake her!

He ran. Flying snow whirled between the cottages and drove against the closed shutters. He remembered how he had hurt her, called her a cold-blooded fish.

"Tina," he said aloud, "my little fish. . . ." He flung the words to the fences, the snow-drifts. He stopped a passing lorry, climbed on to the step and pushed some money in through the window.

"Get me to the bridge," he said. "To the tram stop. . . . Quick. I've got to catch someone before he goes. Quick!"

There was no cluster of people at the stop. Two drunks were arguing, and a woman's figure could be faintly seen behind the trees. Tina!

He ran to her and pulled her into a lane. She looked up at him, frightened.

"What's the matter? What's happened?"

"Nothing. . . . I simply had to look at you again. Come here . . . closer." He unfastened his coat and drew her to him inside it.

"What's the matter? Dmitri?! What's the matter?" She stroked his cheek. "Your face is quivering—why? Has something happened?"

"No—or maybe, yes . . . I've been running, I had to catch you. I wanted to say—" The words tumbled out in rapid confusion.

"What did you want to say?"

"You're the only person for me in the world. . . . And perhaps you were right when you talked of the ape turning into a man."

"But why? What?" She could not follow the torrent of his thoughts.

"I've been running and talking about you."

"Talking—who to?"

"The fence. . . . The trees. . . ."

"What did you say?"

"I said, 'Tina, my little fish. . . .'"

They stood, unconscious of time, pressed together in the dark lane on that frosty night.

"Tina, we've got to be together."

"It's impossible."

"Tina. . . ."

"You're on the same thing again, Dmitri. . . . But I know you. If she'd give us the children. . . . If she'd give them to us, and if we had the cruelty to take them from her, or if we had children of our own. . . . Three ifs, and not one of them could happen. You're not the kind to abandon your children. You couldn't tear yourself away from them. And I—it's not them I'm afraid for, why should I pretend? I'm afraid for myself and you. I could be cruel and selfish enough to trample on their happiness for the sake of ours. . . . But you would never be happy. . . . So I wouldn't be, either. I've told you before. As things are now, you live with them but you long for me and want to be with me. But if you lived with me, you'd long for them and want to be with them."

He held her more closely. "That's quite true. But I'm ready to accept it—accept all that," he said vehemently.



"I know you better than you know yourself. You'd come to miss them more and more. . . . And I would have nothing to comfort you with, because I could not give you a child. And then the time would come when it would be more than you could bear, and sadness would fill our childless house. And I would see your love dying day by day. And one day you would blame me for your own unhappiness and theirs."

"Never!"

"Not in words. In your heart. But I would know, all the same. . . . And I shouldn't be able to bear it. No, Dmitri. . . . It's like the old story, I can be your wife but not your love, or I can be your love but not your wife. There's no third way. And of those two I choose the second!" Pressing herself to him she went on, "Dmitri, my beloved, I always remember that spring—our spring. . . . The soft light of the lamps, so soft. And the limes were in blossom. . . . And we dreamed together of new workshops and went about the factory together, always together. And we weren't afraid of anyone. Not of other people or of ourselves either. . . . And that was love, already. But so clear and happy. . . . When did we lose that springtime?"

He wanted to comfort her.

"We haven't lost it. It's here, with us."

The farewell blizzard of March drifted the snow round them, laid it on their heads and shoulders. Time passed, their legs were numb, but still Dmitri stood holding her, and could neither let her go nor take her with him.

He could not go straight home after Tina had gone, and finally drifted to the works. Roslavlev's office was empty. He sat down at his table and pulled out the latest material about the tests, but took in nothing of what was before him. He could still see that dear face, pinched and chilled by the icy wind.

Suddenly a voice filled the room—a hearty, friendly voice.

"Dmitri Alexeyevich! Are you in the office?"

Bakhirev started and looked at the loud speaker of the factory intercommunication telephone. Valgan? Impossible! What could he want with the shift engineer kept on at the works against his wish?

"I was told you're in your office, Dmitri Alexeyevich."

Yes, it was Valgan. He knew how to do that—take possession of a room with his voice alone. But it was not the Valgan of today speaking, it was that other one, the one of the past with all his expansive charm. Bakhirev made no reply and Valgan called for a third time.

"Why don't you answer, Dmitri Alexeyevich! Can't you hear me?" The voice had become even more friendly and inviting. The spectre of the former Valgan was almost visible in the room.

"I hear you."

Back came the warm, velvety baritone in answer to the grating words.

"Come in here for a while, if you can."

What on earth could the man want?

Valgan was standing by the window. He turned as Bakhirev knocked and with his beaming, all-conquering smile indicated a sheet of paper. It was the Ministry's sanction for the new automatic line in the engine shop.

"Just come. With the night mail."

No. Bakhirev had been mistaken. The former Valgan had not died. He existed, a creature of flesh and blood, with all his accustomed energy and affability—the hot-eyed, white-toothed Valgan. And Bakhirev felt that in spite of all he had endured, something in him responded against his will, to the man's attraction. Don't surrender at the first smile, he told himself. Don't be in a hurry. Why is he telling me about the new line, and not Roslavlev?

"Sit down, sit down, can't you?"

Bakhirev let himself down in the accustomed arm-chair. How fickle that spacious office could be! It had been a hospitable refuge for a newcomer, it had been the roof of a friend, it had been an operating theatre, it had been an enemy's camp. What had it become now? The abode of one risen from the dead? A neutral zone for diplomatic negotiations? Or a confessional for a penitent Valgan? Hardly that. It was queer.

Valgan came to the table, sat down and took his chin in his hand with his accustomed gesture.

"I wanted to share the good news with you. The Ministry's become open-handed, thanks to the success of the engine shop. Your doing and Roslavlev's."

Did he really call me here just to share the news about the automatic line, thought Bakhirev. Doesn't sound very likely. What is it, then? The counterbalances? Or the plenary meeting of the regional Party committee? That's not far off. But what does the plenum matter to him? Kostya's arrival, perhaps?

Ten days previously, Bakhirev had met an old friend at the works—Kostya Zimin. Zimin was now employed in the Party Central Committee office and had come with a team to check complaints and reports. He had spent a few days going about the works and then left for a tour of the district.

Valgan, seeing Bakhirev's perplexity, continued thoughtfully, with a warm intimacy, "Today an automatic line, tomorrow the sandblasts, the day after a whole shop. . . . In all the fuss and bother of everyday matters you don't notice it happening, but when you take a moment to look round—then you see how much has been done. After all, there wasn't even a roof on the place when I first came. It rained and snowed right on to the machines. If you take a wide view, then all these various hitches seem very trivial."

The dark eyes were quiet under the half-lowered lids, the pose was easy, only that hand stroked the chin a little too fast. This movement betrayed a different, disturbed inner rhythm.

The talk wandered from subject to subject—the automatic line, organization of the flow of parts, a school for progressive methods. The stroking movement of the hand became quicker and quicker. The fingers drummed somewhere round the right-hand corner of the mouth. Bakhirev remembered the game of hunt-the-slipper, with its "hot" and "cold". Valgan's hand seemed to be saying, "Hot, hot, still hotter. *Scorching!*"

"How are the tests of that new construction going? How many hours have you?"

So that's it, the counterbalances, thought Bakhirev.

"About one-and-a-half thousand."

"Is that so? . . . Well, it seems to me that's enough. We'll push it through without those last five hundred. Of course, they're gluttons for statistics in the Ministry, but I'll deal with them. I'm thinking of flying to Moscow the day after tomorrow. Get your material ready."

Now that hand gripped the chin till the knuckles whitened, and stopped, motionless.

What differences there can be in a simple movement like stroking the chin! With Valgan, it usually conveyed energy and satisfaction. But ten minutes ago his fingers had rubbed the skin as one rubs it against frost-bite. One minute ago they had beaten a tattoo of growing agitation. Now they gripped the chin, gripped it hard, grew white and were still. That is how fingers grip and whiten in a moment of danger—will it pass or not?

What can it be? Queer! thought Bakhirev, but at once cast aside his apprehensions. Why should it be queer? He had won, the tests had proved him right. Valgan realized it and he was going himself to make a fight for the new design. He was a determined man, if he had taken it up, that was the end of all the trouble.

Bakhirev turned sharply in his chair with a surge of joy. Valgan's eyes were shifty behind the thick lashes—quick, yellow eyes of a lynx, thought Bakhirev. He rose. Valgan's lashes flew up. There was a glint of fright beneath them.

What's he afraid of, Bakhirev wondered. Is he afraid I'll go to Moscow myself and stop him putting things the way he wants? Oh, to hell with him. That's not the important thing. He's going to fight for the new design. And if an opponent like that's turned into an ally—why, that's real victory.

He collected the reports on the tests and hurried home, to get all the papers ready by morning.

Before he had time to finish his supper the bell rang and a gay masculine voice called from the doorway.

"Bakhirev at home? Here's a visitor from another world!" Zimin stood in the hall. "We're on the way back. The road's snowed up, the engine's playing tricks, the driver's tinkering with it and I'm frozen. So I thought I'd take a look at an old friend, maybe he'll let me warm myself."

Ten minutes later he was in Bakhirev's study, wearing Bakhirev's warm dressing-gown, eating the soup left over from dinner and lamenting, "It's the limit, no matter what happens I never lose my appetite."

He ate and talked, he was gay and cheerful as he always was, and his wiry curls stood up over a laughing face. But Bakhirev could see that behind it all, Zimin had something on his mind. He would suddenly frown when there seemed no reason for it, and break off in the middle of a sentence.

"Help yourself to some more, globe-trotter," said Bakhirev. "You must be pretty tired, you can't even talk straight. Where on earth have you been?"



"To the Ukhbinsk district 'anti-mechanizer,'" laughed Zimin. •

"Kurganov? I know him. What d'you think of him?" asked Bakhirev, preparing to defend Kurganov.

"Think?" Zimin put down his fork, turned quickly and tangled himself in Bakhirev's dressing-gown. "I think there are places where people have got out of the way of using their own brains. They wait for instructions about every little thing and they try to make others do the same." His foot jerked angrily beneath the dressing-gown. "You get a man in the district committee, a district right in the middle of the fields, and he'll ask the regional committee, a hundred kilometres off, 'Is the soil ready or not? Is the grain green or isn't it?' And they teach other people to do the same, that's the kind they like. And if they have a man who wants to use his own mother-wits, they give him a crack on the head. Yes, a crack on the head!"

"You mean Kurganov?"

"That man's doing interesting work. It's been a hard year, with a bad harvest. Well, his figures taken as a whole are lower than last year's, just as they are over the whole district. But you go into them, those general figures, pull them to pieces. Take a good look. And you'll find something very interesting. The general indices are worse than last year's, but on the backward farms they're better. I went round those backward farms. They're doing things. All their machinery was mobilized early in the spring to make use of neglected land and swampy patches. And it's precisely from that land they've got their crops. They reaped with scythes because the combines couldn't be used in the hollows. Some things didn't go right, of course. They were late with the grain deliveries. And the experiment with lupine wasn't a success, the lupine dried up. There are always risks in farming. But to come down on them for every mistake means killing initiative. There was one fool, Vostroukhov, the second secretary there, he kept running after me and asking, 'What's the Central Committee line now on sowing periods, what's the line on depth of ploughing, what's the line on cultivation?' I stuck it as long as I could, then I lost my temper and told him, 'The Central Committee line is for you to use your brains! Put 'em to work! That's the line now!' He was as flabbergasted as though I'd asked him to walk on his hands along a tight-rope. That's the sort that flourish in your region."

"How do they get there?"

"How?" Zimin thought a moment. "Weeds on neglected patches. If you drive over the fields in summer, you'll see fine even grain, and then in some corner, or at the turns where the tractor drivers were careless, you may see grass or wild oats, or maybe cornflowers. They're such an innocent heavenly blue, those cornflowers, as though they were thoroughly good, useful, respectable plants. And it's the same with Vostroukhov's kind—neglect some place, and they'll be right there at once."

Zimin rose, pulled up the skirt of the dressing-gown under his belt and began pacing the room. He looked like a large, bright-coloured ball rolling back and forth, topped by hard, butting ram's horns.

"How does the 'anti-mechanizer' himself take it all?" asked Bakhirev.

"He's grand. Even before the September plenum he wanted to get out into the district, he told me, and now, after it, you couldn't get him away. He's rebuilt that machine and tractor station, it's as fine as your cultural club. He's out after efficiency. They had a rotten tractor driver, Medvedyev."

"I know, I've met him."

"Couldn't do anything with him. The others had the whole place clean, painted, but round about Medvedyev it was filthy. They tried this way and that, then they brought him to your works, he was to take back some parts, but there was more to it than that. They took him round the best shops. Well, the day before yesterday Kurganov and I went to the machine and tractor station. All the workshops spick and span. Then we went into the mechanics' workshop and didn't know where we were—on earth or in heaven. The cupboards were blue, so were the shelves and the window frames. And in the middle of the place this same Medvedyev was standing on a stool, blue paint all over him, painting the ceiling. The paint had spattered the floor, and there was Medvedyev's wife down on her knees scraping it clean."

"Gapka?"

"Yes, Gapka. A shrew, that woman, but the blue paint had sent her crazy, too. She could only open her mouth, but not a word came out of it. Kurganov saw it was all up with the ceiling, but he begged Medvedyev, 'Spare the workbenches, at least!' 'No, Comrade Secretary, I can't,' said Medvedyev. 'Now I've started, I can't stop. I'll paint everything there is.'"

"So Medvedyev's altered too," said Bakhirev.

"At first when the change-over to workers' conditions and guaranteed pay was announced, he didn't believe it. And when he actually got the first pay packet he went on a three-day spree down sheer joy."

Zimin was full of his trip; he poured out his account of it, infecting Bakhirev with his own animation.

"Movement—everything's on the move," said Bakhirev. "The Ukhabsinsk machine and tractor station, and even Medvedyev; but what about the works here? You must get this straight," he went on urgently, "I'm in the engine shop now. And what's holding things up? A wholly unjustified gap in capacity between the main and auxiliary shops. Machines standing idle—and all because of some little thing. Our plans for mechanization are divorced from organization. It's like that 'anti-mechanizer' Kurganov said one day, 'We breed horses but don't think of harness.' Planning. Oh, I quite understand what a complex thing planning is in a country the size of ours. But we've got to have it. Got to! Without that we can't develop our full powers. Incidentally—at the works here, too, there's a change. We're going to have an automatic line. And Valgan himself wants to go to Moscow tomorrow about the counterbalances."

"Tomorrow? What's his hurry, all of a sudden? He'll hardly go tomorrow. Our group have some things to discuss with him."

"Discuss?"

"There've been reports. Got to get everything clear before the plenary meeting of the regional Party committee."

"We're expecting a rather specially important plenum."

"Yes, there'll be a hot time. The Communists are disturbed—and not without cause."

"I've heard Blikin's to report to the Central Committee."

"Yes, he'll probably have to. The plenum'll show. But to come back to Valgan—why's he suddenly taken it into his head to go tomorrow? Where's your phone? I want to ring up our lot in the hotel. . . . Hullo, how are you getting on?" he said into the receiver. "I've had an interesting trip. We could do with more anti-mechanizers like that. Don't hope for an early night, it'll take till after midnight to tell you everything. I'm with an old friend now, warming up. What about you? What! Where? How do you know?"

Bakhirev could not make out what it was all about, but he saw Zimin's face change—the lips tightened, the brows drew together.

Zimin put down the receiver; he turned back to Bakhirev after a pause, slowly.

"M'yes." He fell silent again, head down, weighing what he had just heard and what he intended to say. His movements, usually so brisk and light, were slow, deliberate, as on a slow-motion film. And his speech, quick and eager a moment before, became equally deliberate. "Yes. . . . So you were right. . . . But you won't be pleased with the way it's been proved. The counterbalances from the other works have started tearing off too."

"What?"

"Just that. In the south the spring ploughing's begun. And it's from the other works the southern regions get their tractors."

In a flash Bakhirev visualized what this meant and shuddered. He had been certain the fault in design would show itself sooner or later, sooner in the works where the technological standard was lower, later in the one where it was higher. And he had been right—the fault had now shown itself in both places. And if one of his predictions had come true, the other one would, too. That meant all the tractors put out by two huge works in the course of a year were threatened. Counterbalances would tear loose on a mass scale, on thousands of tractors working all over the country. He was like an oracle horrified as he sees his prophecies beginning to come true. Catching a glimpse of himself in the mirror, he saw the fright in his own eyes. It was the same fright he had seen in Valgan's. In a flash it came to him—Valgan knew. That was what had brought the spectre of the old Valgan, that was why he was so anxious to go to Moscow himself, and at once. That was the reason for the agitated tattoo on his chin.

The thought of Valgan came and disappeared at once. This was the time to act. Thankfully he remembered that in these difficult months, people had not been inactive. There was the keen vision of Grandad Kornei Korneyevich, the hard, practical sense of Valentin Roslavlev, Shatrov's intuition, Zyablikov's quick wits, Chubasov's determination—all the effort of those who had not drifted with the stream but worked tirelessly on the counterbalances. If it had not been for all this, he would have been utterly lost and bewildered now. Everything would



have been black. What a good thing the thinking out and testing of the new design was all finished, and what a good thing a way of dealing with those tractors already on the fields was worked out in detail, thought Bakhirev gratefully—and remembered many furious attacks by Chubasov, Roslavlev and the others, demanding that he get busy.

Now the works was ready for action, forewarned and forearmed.

"We must get the new type of fixtures into production at once," he told Zimin. "And all counterbalances of the old design must be taken off tractors throughout the country, without delay."

Alarmed by the news, Zimin soon left, saying he would see Bakhirev again in a few days. Bakhirev was alone. How much had happened that evening! The counterbalances. . . . Valgan's behaviour. . . . All that Kostya Zimin had told him about Kurganov. . . . The regional committee plenum. . . . The changes in the fate of the counterbalances, and the works, and perhaps the whole region. . . . He wanted to talk to Tina, at once. He dialled her number. A man's sleepy, good-humoured voice answered.

Bakhirev put down the receiver. He could not talk to Tina's husband, invent a pretext for the call. He paced the room, then stopped again before the telephone. Perhaps she would answer this time? Again he dialled the number, heard the same voice and put down the receiver. It was like a valve, blocking off from Tina the flow of that great, impatient torrent of life he bore. All they had was backyards, he thought angrily, backyards and nothing else. . . . But he had to talk to somebody. He rang up Roslavlev.

## GOOD WEAPONS

People emerged from the Central Party Committee conference hall, bringing with them a sense of deep, restrained excitement. Our turn now, thought Bakhirev. Even as the thought passed through his mind, a voice called for all concerned with the second point on the agenda.

Bakhirev was one of the first to enter. While the others came staidly in and seated themselves, he had a chance to look about him.

How could he ever have guessed that the road on which he set forth, sharing a car with Valgan over a year ago on that disturbed March night, would eventually lead him *here*?

The huge windows were filled with the blue March sky. The high walls of milk-white marble reflected the light and seemed to gleam with a soft effulgence of their own. The room was airy and despite the warm sunshine it was light and fresh, for marble walls give out coolness.

Four rows of square, glass-topped tables ran down the length of the hall; close to him stood a long table, and behind it people whose names and faces were long familiar. They were talking quietly, handing one another blueprints and charts.

Why had he been sent for? He could not understand it.

To him, everything in this room called for the truth. The light from its great windows seemed to shine through his life making it transparent as glass, so that every spot or stain, unnoticed before, stood out and demanded an accounting. Writhing inwardly before this clarity of vision, he tried to comfort himself. After all, he hadn't done so badly as all that. If he'd made mistakes, he had done his best to rectify them. His way had been blocked by that Valgan-Blikin barrier. But just as he had warned them, the counterbalances were tearing loose in both works. The old design was no good. A new design had been found, an improved one, tried and tested. Why should he hang his head? He ought to be glad! . . . He looked up, straightened his back, reached up and gave a good, encouraging tug to his hair. But the whiteness of those walls and his own habit of seeking the unvarnished truth stopped him. Don't lie to yourself, he thought. The accidents would have begun six months later but for your haste. You could precipitate the crisis with the counterbalances, but you couldn't stop it. You're to blame. You're to blame and there's no excuse.

His conscience accused him implacably. He slumped in his seat again. Hunched up, gloomy, he looked crushed; and it never occurred to him to think of the impression he might produce.

Valgan amazed him. For Valgan the question, "Am I to blame or not?" simply did not exist. His only question was, "Will *they* blame me or not?" He sat there, his handsome, clean-cut face raised, evidently anxious not to appear weak or guilty.

Bakhirev looked at Kurganov. "Smiling all over," as Ryzhik used to say when he was little about an especially broad, merry smile. The big-headed secretary of the Ukhbinsk district was not merely smiling, he was "smiling all over," a smile of lips, eyes and the light arches of his brows. And why shouldn't he smile, Bakhirev thought. No counterbalances hung over his head. The name "anti-mechanizer" was wrongly given him. He's cleared, he's in the right, and fortunate to come here, cleared and right. Eh, if only the same thing applied to me! . . . And what about Chubasov? Bakhirev glanced over at the Party organizer's bent head. Yes, my counterbalances have hit him too, a ricochet. And here's Blikin! What an air he's got—struts in, sits down as though he owned the place . . . and after the regional committee plenum, too!

Bakhirev was dumbfounded by Blikin's lofty self-assurance—here, where the very walls called for the truth, plain and unadorned.

Blikin, however, saw those walls with his own eyes. He saw the hard coldness of unshakable marble. Those familiar marble walls, he felt, kept out everything alien and dangerous to the majestic greatness in which he was a participant. In the regional committee, people of parochial perspectives could make all sorts of petty attacks. Here the range of vision was wide, here trifles could not touch him.

As usual, he did not admit even to himself the real significance of his feelings and hopes. His mind ran along the lines of accustomed phrases. They'll criticize me but they'll support me. No time for trifles here. This is the place for

large vision. . . . He held his head with its long sensitive nose a little higher than usual, his neck beneath the grey hair was a little stiffer. Leisurely he let his gaze rove over the faces, trying to read each one while preserving his own inscrutability. But then his brows twitched. That smiling Kurganov! Chubasov! He had known they were sent for by the Central Committee, but had never expected them to get any further than some department. Why had that pair been brought in here? He did not regard them as dangerous, but the very fact of their presence was a hint of danger somewhere. Involuntarily he remembered a similar feeling that morning when he came to the Kremlin. He had come on business. He was accustomed to seeing the Kremlin empty, majestic, inaccessible. To enter was a privilege, an honour. And there, in that Kremlin, he found a crowd of men and women, boys and girls whom nobody knew, pushing their way into all corners, clicking cameras. A Kremlin open to all, he mused; it used to be like that once. . . . But when? There was Civil War, devastation, disaster, cold. Was this a return to the past? Impossible! But still, the unaccustomed crowd in the Kremlin made him alert, suspicious. In the same way the fact that this hall could be open to men like Kurganov and Chubasov gave him a wary, uneasy feeling. In front of Chubasov's wavy head he caught a glimpse of wild tufts of hair. Was *he* here too?! The counterbalances. They were a vulnerable point in the report Blikin would make that day, but a very minute one. When one sails the wide ocean, it is not difficult to avoid some small submerged reef. But how would that shaggy living indictment behave? And Valgan?

Valgan caught his glance and wondered—will he sink? Or will they support him and help him? Like Bakhirev, it was Valgan's first time in that hall, but like Blikin, he saw it from his own point of view. This simplicity could not deceive him, he thought. He noted the gleam of marble, the delicately carved gold of the chandeliers and ventilators. This, he felt, was a place where one must shine, where one must take advantage of the rare opportunity to produce an impression on people of real importance. He needed to know whether Blikin would sink or swim so as to determine his own line of conduct. Quite calm, he thought, watching Blikin. Nodded to the secretaries. He's at home here, one of their own. Strong. He'll swim to shore all right. . . . Valgan knew that he himself was in an awkward and decidedly unpleasant situation—there were the counterbalances, the hitches in production, his failure to be elected to the Party Committee, and the complaints of the workers. But he also knew his strong side, his energy, determination and ingenuity. All right, he'd missed his mark sometimes recently, but how sure his aim had been during the war! They must know that. This was his chance, he mustn't lose it. He must show what he was made of. Impress them. So they'd remember him. . . . His hand feverishly kneaded his chin as though stimulating his whole being, then stopped, motionless, like a dog making a point. And Valgan himself was rather like that dog—taut, alert, prepared to leap forward. His leap must be timed for the exact moment, not a second earlier or later. And it must be directed exactly at the target, not an inch to the right or left.

Everyone seems to have settled down, thought Blikin, isn't it time to begin? He coughed quietly, clearing his throat.



One of the secretaries gave a friendly nod to someone in the hall. Griffin came up to the table, insignificant and sack-like as usual, and bent over some papers.

"So it's quite true? Why didn't you ring up yesterday, Sasha? Or drop in?" Catching fragments of phrases, Blikin was amazed. So a secretary of the Central Committee talked to him like an old friend. That was why he was so bold. And never a hint had he let drop! The fox!

But after all, there was nothing alarming about it. Some of the Central Committee secretaries had only recently been regional committee secretaries and sat beside Blikin himself on these same chairs. They were on equally informal terms with him. No, he thought, they won't let me down. They may give me a rap over the knuckles, that's all right and proper, but they'll support me in the end.

At last he was given the floor. He went up to the table. He had brought the affairs of a region as big as some whole countries concentrated within his head in exact phrases.

Majestically, with a sense of inner elevation, he brought out the usual introduction—rather like an elderly general putting on a favourite old parade uniform. The general feels younger, more erect, altogether more imposing in this uniform, every seam and buckle of which is hallowed by tradition. For Blikin, many forms of speech, many approaches were equally hallowed, and he revelled in his mastery of them.

He knew, for instance, that to give the right tone, he must begin by speaking of deficiencies.

"In the period under review, there have been serious deficiencies and failings in the work of the regional Party organization. . . . The bureau of the regional committee and I, as first secretary, have not done all that was necessary. . . ."

The habitual phrases rolled out smoothly. His face, confident and inscrutable, was flushed with hidden excitement. The usual sense of stiffness in the nape of his neck was intensified, his head was tilted back as though burdened with business of especial importance and deep responsibility. His self-criticism finished, he turned with smooth, practised ease to the second and main part of his report.

"If, however, we analyze deeply the trends of development. . . ."

He spoke of how the town had been transformed from a place of ruins to a place of factories, of the hydro-electric station rising on a river once thick with the water-logged hulls of bombed-out ships, of the millionaire collective farms on what had been scorched earth. He poured out a spate of figures that made one wonder at his memory.

"The general line of industrialization is typified by the following figures. . . ." He gave them without so much as a glance at the paper before him. "The distribution of production powers is defined by such data as—"

He was the bearer of all this, and elevated by it, he felt himself invulnerable. The petty storms of that difficult regional committee plenum sank and vanished into the distance.

At first all listened intently as though awaiting something, asking something of Blikin and of themselves. But then two of those at the table exchanged

glances and a few words. Somebody shrugged. Somebody began doodling. But only Valgan's keen glance caught these infinitesimal changes, noticed the gradually growing disharmony between Blikin's lofty rhetoric and the businesslike calm of those to whom he was reporting. The more Blikin declaimed, the more prosaic and matter-of-fact the people at the table looked. One of the secretaries turned a pale, firm face to the chairman and said curtly. "Everybody here knows these figures. We're wasting time."

Another, however, at the end of the table, raised a narrow hand and defended Blikin with "No, let him tell us what he thinks necessary. Don't stop him."

A few seconds' silence cut like a wedge into Blikin's flowing speech. The suddenness of it made him lose the thread, there was a short pause of confusion. He rustled his papers as though seeking the broken end among them.

"In the coming five years our production capacity should be sharply raised by the hydro-electric station. We commenced the construction of the dam this year." His aplomb had returned and again his voice resounded confidently. "We must take for ourselves those millions of cubic metres of water which are still poured uselessly into the sea."

The chairman turned his strong, agile body to Blikin.

"We know all that! You'd do better to tell us what they boil and bake in your parts."

"Boil and bake—how?"

"The ordinary way. What's there to eat for the workers building your dam?"

"Meat. . . . Potatoes. . . ." Brought down to earth so suddenly, it took Blikin a moment to recover his wits.

"Meat—not much of that, I expect. More potatoes. . . . And what do they fry them with?"

"Butter."

"Or perhaps margarine? Or maybe plain water?"

Stopping me for these trifles, thought Blikin in surprise and chagrin. But he was not one to be put off by a few interruptions.

"I wanted to take the question of agriculture in its turn, but if you wish, I can rearrange my report. I can begin with the production of meat, butter and potatoes by the collective farms of the region."

With his former smooth eloquence he spoke of the success of collective farms, of new state farms, and increases in the cultivated area of land.

"With respect to potatoes, the crop brought in this year is twice as big as last year's. Deliveries to the state—"

"And how much was lost?" came another interruption, once more bringing him down with a bump. "How many remained in the ground?"

Blikin halted. Many years of experience told him it was no accident that he was being constantly interrupted about trifles. No. They were laying traps for him with those trifles. It was evidently a pre-arranged plan, not yet clear, but quite definite.

He was alarmed, the stiffness left his neck. His head turned to the table, then bent over his papers. Stubbornly but without the former suaveness he continued.

"There were difficulties in harvesting, as there always are, but they did not prevent us from coping with the potato problem. The grain problem too has been dealt with successfully in the region. The harvest for the past three years. . . ."

His figures were buttresses. With their aid he had climbed to heights from which he had never yet been brought down. But again the chairman interrupted him.

"You give us figures. But how are we to understand the harvest figures, for instance—on the root or in the barns? On the root? Really? That's no harvest yet. I visited your region last year, a good year for crops. And everywhere I saw piles of grain under the open sky. As I motored along the roads I sniffed—what's that? Whenever the wind blew I smelt malt. I followed the smell. It was autumn, with rain, stubble, black soil, but all round the piles of grain I saw rings of green! The wheat was starting to grow, as though it were May. I took a spade and dug down," the chairman rose and illustrated his words with the exact, accustomed gestures of a man digging. "The grain had matted itself into felt with its new roots. Half the piles were spoiled! That's your harvest on the root for you!"

Not only Blikin's cheeks—his forehead, chin and nose turned a purplish red. There was nothing new in such losses. And harvest figures were always given on the root. Why did they suddenly demand from him figures of the harvest in the barns? Were they deliberately picking holes? But what for? Why? His smooth, trained voice trembled a little with alarm and bewilderment.

"I'm not the only one who takes root figures."

"And you're not the only one whose figures I question. We're wasting our crops. A quarter or even a third is left in the fields. And still we reckon the 'harvest on the root' and glibly say 'the grain problem is solved'!"

So the reproach applied not only to Blikin; but this alarmed him even more. Yes, it was quite true. Yes, thousands of centners were lost in harvesting. Yes, undug potatoes had been left rotting on thousands of hectares. People knew about it, but by a kind of tacit agreement nothing was said. Why upset everything when the cause of this regrettable state of things lay in the many wartime and post-war difficulties? Sheltered by such considerations, the phenomenon itself became something secret, hidden, not without its danger. And now all of a sudden this hidden thing was brought up from the depths and displayed. Blikin was afraid not only for himself; he was frightened by this naked disclosure of secret things. Alarm for himself grew into alarm for those around him. He heard the same dry, hard voice that had spoken earlier saying, "I think everything's clear now."

Again the other voice objected, "No, not quite everything. Don't be in a hurry."

What was it that was clear to one and not to the other?

He sought within those marble walls the accustomed marble grandeur but saw nothing sculptural, monumental. He saw people. They could argue. They



opened this hall to men like Kurganov and Bakhirev. He wanted to warn them—"such accessibility will be abused!"

But he knew nobody would listen.

That disharmony between Blikin's behaviour and the atmosphere of the meeting which Valgan had sensed at the beginning had now grown, become a real dissonance. If he doesn't see it, Valgan thought, if he doesn't make a right-about turn, he's finished.

But Blikin was incapable of a right-about turn. The familiar ground had slid from under his feet, and losing it, he himself was lost; he could only clutch convulsively at what he knew, what he felt to be safe. His mental suppleness, so excellent in his youth, had been lost with the years. The long habit of bending and accommodating himself in one direction only had made his mind fatally one-sided. And Blikin, who had formerly manoeuvred with such skill, could not find his way, could not adapt himself or manoeuvre under the new conditions. He clung to the old, familiar ways as stubbornly as he clung to life.

The lifebelt of great affairs was close. He must not let it slip! He must talk, talk of what had been achieved, of what was planned. Talk, talk, talk. . . .

"Dozens of machines have appeared in recent years on the fields of our region, machines never before seen there. Such a speed of mechanization is unexampled in the history of our region. . . ."

"Stop, stop a minute," the chairman interrupted again. "While we're talking about machines, mechanization. . . . You had an article about some 'anti-mechanizer.' Comrade Kurganov's here, I believe?"

Kurganov rose. Small, with a head too big for his body, he forgot to smooth an inappropriate smile from his face, and stood in awkward silence. The chairman gave him a laughing glance.

"So this is the anti-mechanizer, the terror of combines! I expected shoulders a yard wide!"

Blikin felt the joke a friendly one. Its tone was very different from that of the interruptions he had suffered. Could that newt represent the "forces" which were gathering against him, Blikin? The inferiority of experience, knowledge and will power leaped to the eye. You don't play cautious with that kind, you just sweep them aside with one powerful stroke.

Blikin attacked.

"Comrade Kurganov has been leading the Party work in the district for one year. In this period the crop level has dropped. Lupine was lost on a large area. In animal husbandry greedy self-interest has been encouraged. This is not an accident, it arises from the district committee secretary's contempt for the basic theses of Marxism-Leninism. In particular, he underestimates Lenin's most important thesis on the mechanization of agriculture. Narrow practical views led to the secretary urging the scythe instead of the combine, and wanting to send to the potato fields—not machines, but pigs! And this is no chance phenomenon, it expresses a rejection of socialist technique, socialist principles of agriculture."

"But have you, yourself, seen the wheat that was reaped with scythes? And do you know the cost of harvesting potatoes by machine in the conditions of that district? No? Let us ask Comrade Zimin."

Zimin, with his twists of curls like ram's horns, barely came up to Blikin's chin.

"If you don't go round the district and get to the root of things, it's all very simple, indices are worse, so the work's worse. Only—you spoke just now about a deep analysis of the trends of development, Comrade Blikin," with a flash of irony in the side glance of his quick, round eyes. "These trends are to be found, be it said, in the depths of the countryside itself, on the fields. But you have never been on these fields, not once. Well, if we really employ deep analysis, this is what we find. The indices are worse than last year's throughout the region, it was a particularly bad year for farming. But in the Ukhabin'sk district there's an interesting point. The leading farms had a somewhat lower harvest, but the worst ones actually raised theirs, and the members received bigger remuneration per workday unit."

With a mingling of contempt and bewilderment Blikin looked first at the round-headed district committee secretary, then at Zimin with his boyish curls. So these two midgets had suddenly joined forces to attack him. And the chairman caught up their tune.

"So it was a bad year in general, but the weak farms did better," he observed. "Didn't you find that interesting?" he turned to Blikin, but Blikin said nothing. "Didn't you ever once wonder why it was like that? Or go to see for yourself? It didn't interest you at all? But it interests us! I personally am very interested indeed in seeing how people of 'narrow practical perspectives' work, people like Kurganov. Comrade Blikin has no use for these practical perspectives, he prefers general ideological leadership." The sarcasm gave a cutting edge to his anger. Turning back to Kurganov, he said in a tone suddenly different, an unmistakably friendly tone, "Only don't be offended at the definition 'practical,' Comrade Kurganov. We're all practical men, like you. Our job is, by practical means adapted to concrete conditions, to build communism."

Blikin had expected criticism. But this?! To humiliate him deliberately, in front of everybody, and hold up this midget as an example? He took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead, drew a deep breath, glanced at the animated faces, at the cloud outside the window. Could this be—the end? No! He had years, years behind him. . . . And all that had been done in those years.

Cut short in full flow, he stood in silence like a schoolboy disgraced before the whole class. And Zimin and Kurganov instructed him. . . .

"It was those lagging farms that started cultivating the neglected, overgrown land by the woods," Zimin explained. "And it was on those fields that the best crops grew under conditions of drought. The strongest farms undertook to assist the weaker ones."

"You told me about a milkmaid who increased the milk yield two-and-a-half times," said the chairman with lively interest. "Luzhkova, I think her name was."

"Yes, Anna Luzhkova. She's a member of the very worst collective farm. She was caught stealing. She admitted herself that she'd been 'using' the milk and the hay too. Well, she was given a new 'per-cow' plan, as they put it there, and began to be paid according to the amount of milk turned in. The other farms helped out with feed too. A milkmaid from one of the best farms, Lizaveta Yabloneva, a Communist, volunteered to help her, and the two became firm friends. The next thing, this Anna Luzhkova started taking her cows out to night pastures and carrying a sack of salt out on her own back, too. And she began mowing green feed for her cows. Now she's the best on the farm. Businesslike, efficient, friendly—it's a real pleasure to talk to her. She's soon to be accepted into the Party. I'd give her a recommendation myself if she needed it!"

Blikin gasped. They brought up some Anna to flay him. They were interested in this Anna. But him, Blikin—what about him? Perhaps his fate was already ruthlessly sealed? No, not yet, not quite!

He could not help seeing that even those who spoke so sharply against him seemed to be probing and searching—"Are you really as bad as we think? Are you capable of seeing for yourself where you have failed?"

Among the searching, probing looks Blikin caught some that were sympathetic. . . . Stand firm, he thought. They won't smash me completely. There are plenty of regions. If they remove me from a big one, they'll give me another, a bit smaller.

At last Zimin sat down.

"I was interrupted," said Blikin. "I was just about to speak of the advances in animal husbandry. The milk yield in a number of districts has risen 20-30 per cent. Egg production has risen. . . ."

He felt safer behind his barrier of figures. He could see that the people at the table were talking among themselves, they did not want to listen, but he kept on piling and piling up his saving barrier.

"From the point of view of grammar," someone at the table said quietly, "all your statements are impersonal. The milk yield goes up, the dam rises, production increases. . . . But perhaps they don't go up, rise, increase of themselves? Perhaps it is people who are building, cultivating?"

Those unhurried words held condemnation. The system of Blikin's work, his line of thought, even the very structure of his report from the thesis to the verbal forms—everything was incompatible with the spirit reigning in this room. And Valgan knew what all this meant. He's not secretary any longer. Why did I join up with him? I know how to work. I love work. I need not have joined him, I could have been with that Kurganov, even. . . . Valgan's instinct of self-preservation spoke insistently. I'm no Blikin. What can Blikin do? Cringe to those above him, wipe his boots on those below. I'm different. And he's going to drag me down with him. . . . I must break away from him. . . . Find some pretext. . . . Today . . . here. . . .

His hands gripped the arms of his chair more tightly, he was tense as a coiled spring, waiting for the right moment, fearing to let it slip.



But Blikin still stood firm. He no longer had the calm, sure consciousness of his own worth with which he had begun, nor was he flushed and indignant as he had been half an hour ago; he was a tired, aging man with stooping shoulders and hanging head. In this unaccustomed pose, his slack double-chin and flabby cheeks hung over his collar.

Blikin saw everything, understood everything, but stubborn hope kept insisting, "Not today. . . not now. It couldn't happen. . . . Things are bad with agriculture in the region. But industry! Yes, it's a good thing after all that industry was left to the last. Industry'll carry me ashore. All's not lost yet. Not everything." In answer to the question about people, he named a number of those who had distinguished themselves in agricultural work and concluded, "I shall speak of the people who have distinguished themselves in industry later. First, permit me to pass over to that sector. I wanted to begin with it; if I had, the picture would have been rather a different one."

Then came more well-rounded phrases, the usual spate of facts and figures. He was floating to shore, still breathless, still trembling with inner chill, but moving with growing confidence, as a half-drowned man swims on a strong wave to solid ground. For a long time there were no interruptions. He raised his head, the slack skin seemed to tauten and roll up in a fine slope from the neck to the small freckled chin.

Bakhirev listened, his eyes on the long line of windows. A cloud, transparent before the sun, floated from one to another. And just as smoothly the speech floated from factory to factory. Everywhere things go well, he thought sadly, everywhere they cope with the work, it's only me. . . . But then Blikin came to the tractor works. "Targets have been reached and passed. Production of a new model has been launched. Costs are lowered. . . . Progressive technology is being introduced—chill casting, metallo-ceramics. . . . Such workers as Sugrobin and Igoreva are an example to all. . . . The Red October Works—" Bakhirev turned sharply in his astonishment. Had he already gone on to another? Nothing more to say about the tractor works? Passed over the scrap, the counterbalances? But how could he keep quiet about those?

However, Blikin had kept quiet.

At the end of his report he gave only the figures for average industrial scrap at the biggest factories of the region.

"As you see, scrap is still impermissibly high, but it is being reduced."

The second part of the report was impressive and went smoothly. Blikin finished and wiped his forehead.

There were questions—about the rise in labour productivity, about quotas, about personnel.

"You gave figures of individual production records. But in the cast-iron foundry of the tractor works, waste and fluctuation of personnel have also reached record heights. Have you enquired into the reason for records of this kind?"

Bakhirev tensed. So it had not passed over. They were coming back to the tractor works.

Blikin turned towards the chairman and the tip of his long, sensitive nose seemed to turn too.

"We have taken steps. . . . We have fought the fluctuation of labour. . . . Improved the canteen. . . . Moved people into a new hostel. A splendid hostel. With its own library, study room, shower and laundry. . . . It was even photographed for the *Ogonyok* magazine."

"So everything is quite all right, even excellent? Well—have you been to see how the foundrymen are living—not in the new hostel, in the old one?"

"It has not been possible for me to pay visits to all the hostels."

"'Pay visits'? There's no visit of state demanded, we're not diplomats. But to learn the real facts, the real conditions of the workers in the worst shop of the biggest factory—that certainly is demanded of us, as Party leaders. . . . Will you tell us, Comrade Zimin?"

Zimin moved more heavily than ever. The sun was entangled in his curly hair and his face had a look of concentration, like that of a surgeon preparing to perform a serious but necessary operation.

"Only twenty workers from the iron foundry were moved into the new hostel, and that was on the insistence of the ex-chief engineer. The removal of the others was postponed by the director until a new block should be ready. The majority of the foundrymen live in a semi-basement. The workers with long service are gradually being moved, but there are very few of those, because the labour turnover in the iron foundry is high. And newcomers naturally get the worst places. So the result is that the workers in the most difficult shop are concentrated in a semi-basement, so damp that the very mattresses rot. That applies to both single men and families."

Why all this fuss, thought Blikin. Everybody knew about the war and the housing shortage. These were petty, unavoidable trifles. . . . But Zimin continued his disclosures with a bluntness that set Blikin's teeth on edge.

"The worst of all is that children are living there. They must be got out at once."

Blikin's eyes went from face to face, and many of those faces with an involuntary, barely perceptible movement, turned from him.

To Valgan the situation was now clear. Out with it all! The only salvation lay in honesty. Honest admissions—about difficulties, neglect, mistakes, everything—straight and blunt! The only salvation.

"Tell us about the accidents with the counterbalances," a voice said. "The fixture of counterbalances isn't a trifle easily put right. Kindly explain how this trifle grew into a disaster. Over a thousand tractors put out of action!"

It's come, Bakhirev thought. That's why I was sent for. I have to answer for them.

Blikin hesitated. They had touched the vulnerable point in industry, in the part of his report in which he felt himself strong. This was the moment of real danger. Don't hurry, he thought. Be careful.

"Counterbalances tore loose," he mumbled vaguely. A quiet but sharp voice broke in.

"Flying counterbalances—that seems to be the first big technical innovation you can speak of?"

"The regional committee relied on others in that matter. We were misled by experts' opinions and by the fact that there were no mishaps among tractors from the sister factory. The regional committee knew, too, that a new type was being made. In mastering new production processes snags of one kind or another are bound to crop up in any works."

"Snags of one kind or another"? So you put the breakages caused by the counterbalances on the same level as any other snags? And you—have you yourself ever seen those tractors smashed by the counterbalances? Comrade Grinin, will you tell us about them?"

Grinin spoke with curt exactitude.

"The damage can only be compared with battle damage. In peacetime I had never seen anything like it. The bonnet, cylinder block and oil pipes are smashed, and the crankshaft put out of action."

"And who is answerable for this outrageous state of affairs?"

"The man responsible has already answered for it," Blikin thrust in quickly. "The chief engineer, Bakhirev, received a Party reprimand and was removed from his position."

"Is Comrade Bakhirev here?"

Bakhirev rose. He felt he was expected to say something, but what could he say? Present some justification, excuses? But there was no excuse. Admit his guilt? But everybody knew he was guilty. Give promises and assurances for the future? But that would be just words, and words were mere sound until they were backed by actions.

He was silent, but his silence was different from that of Kurganov, smiling happily, conscious of complete vindication. This silence was heavy, as though weighted with the many tons of shattered counterbalances.

Valgan could see the painful impression Bakhirev's silence produced. He knew the words awaited by those people sitting at the long table. This was it, his moment, the moment he had awaited. Not a second earlier or later!

"Allow me." The resonant baritone filled the room. "We have to be honest. As director of the factory, the responsibility for the damage rests first and foremost upon me. I, and I only, must answer for it."

It was so unexpected that even Bakhirev started. The face boldly raised, the direct, shining gaze. . . . Honest, bold? Not as bad as I thought, evidently.

Blikin was too much like Valgan to believe in his sincerity. A manoeuvre! But we stood together. In taking the blame himself, he also lays it on me. And he puts himself in an advantageous position—he admits it, while I. . . . He's chosen a winning hand for himself alone. A slick customer. But I'll spoil his little game. You want to push me down? You'll be the first to fall!

Like a camphor injection, indignation redoubled his strength. He rose.

"The belatedness of Comrade Valgan's honest admission has cost the region dear. For a very long time Comrade Valgan deceived the regional committee; now he comes forward in the role of an honest Communist confessing his



error. But this was not an accidental mistake, it was deliberate, planned deception."

"That's a lie!"

The chairman rang his bell.

"Comrade Valgan, you will be given the floor later."

"But these walls should hear only the truth!"

Melodramatically Valgan demanded the truth, but melodrama was out of place in that hall. Blikin made skilful use of his mistake, by the contrast of his own dignified restraint.

"The first cases of counterbalances tearing loose Comrade Valgan deliberately and cleverly concealed from the regional committee. Taking advantage of the machine and tractor station's difficulties with spare parts, Valgan proposed the following bargain: the machine and tractor station would take the blame, and in return the factory would pay all the repair expenses and in addition, supply the station with the spare parts that were short. Valgan deceived the regional committee just as he is now trying to deceive the Central Committee."

Valgan had not expected this counterattack. In olden times, they used to cast a victim on the altar in a moment of danger. Blikin had chosen him for the victim. But it wouldn't come off. Blikin wasn't strong enough for that. He had grown stiff, sluggish. He had not the quick, supple adaptability needed to catch and utilize the prevailing atmosphere. But Valgan was keenly sensitive to it, and able to trim his sails to any wind that blew. Should he defend himself? No! The best defence was attack!

When Blikin ended, Valgan asked for the floor. His face burned, his brown hands clenched into fists, then stretched out, upturned, before him, arguing, demanding trust, menacing and branding his opponent.

"It was not I who misled the regional committee, it was Comrade Blikin who to my eternal regret confirmed and strengthened me in my error. Was it not you, Sergei Vasilyevich, who kept repeating that at the second works the counterbalances did not break loose, consequently, the fault did not lie in the design? You wanted peace and quietness and you lulled us into complacency. The worst of it is, that this is not the only such case. It is your line of conduct. The fatal line of complacency and satisfaction. We must speak the truth, only the truth, however bitter it may be!"

The sympathetic attention of those seated at the table told Valgan that he had hit the mark, and encouraged, he continued passionately, "If we speak the truth, what was it you demanded of us, leaders of industry? The plan! Reports! Premiums! Figures! A broad scope and scale! What did you care for smashed tractors? A regrettable trifle. You left such trifles behind and carried us with you!"

Valgan gave another glance at the table. Concentrated attention. He saw they expected the truth, plain criticism, and having found this right note, he decided to play it as loudly as possible. "The secretary of the regional committee influenced Communists to keep quiet about deficiencies, to gloss them over. He spoke proudly here of the work of new factories. But at whose expense did

they work, those new factories? It was we who by tacit agreement made them machines and machine tools and foundry equipment. But they were given the credit. The Red October Works is supposed to supply us, but it supplies more disorganization than metal. No rhythm, no plan, no responsibility for quality! And the same failings are typical of the majority of the old factories."

"So that's it," came from the table.

The indeterminate remark fell like a stone into Valgan's heated, apprehensive mind as it reached desperately out for salvation. His thoughts, their flow broken, whirled in confusion, in tremulous circles of "What did that mean? Approval? Disapproval? Surprise?"

When Valgan took over the factory, any criticism of its work played into his hand. The harsher the criticism of what had gone before and the more obvious the difficulties, the brighter present and future successes of Valgan. Now, tasting the words with his own tongue, Valgan decided they could only mean veiled encouragement, and stimulated, he redoubled his efforts.

"The same failings are typical of the region's industry as a whole. Take the Kalinin Factory. . . ." Leaving industry without a leg to stand on, he turned to construction. "All our newspapers sang paeans to the housing project for power station builders. But what is it, in reality? Grey boxes roofed with shingles. They'll collapse before the station's finished. And how are they built?"

Sympathetic attention was giving way to an alertness less sympathetic, but Valgan was no longer watching faces. He was carried away with a fawning eagerness to condemn all that had been done earlier. He wanted to overthrow the past and its embodiment, Blikin, not for the sake of the future, but in order to mount higher on a wave of condemnation.

He did it with an ardour entirely sincere. For years he had had to play the obedient little boy to Blikin, whose weaknesses he well knew. For years he had longed, secretly and in vain, for what he considered his by right. Yes, by right! Was it not obvious that in brains, talent and energy he was worthy of the highest positions? Not a mere director of an outlying factory, not Blikin's subordinate. No! A ministerial portfolio, a scale of work extending over the whole country—that was the proper position for a man of his brains and will power! A lifetime of greedy ambition, unsatisfied, had accumulated within him, quietly, unseen, like pressurized gas, ready to burst forth. Now the seal of silence was broken. The valves were open. And the tightly-compressed venom of years burst out in a hissing stream. Criticize! Pour out all that concentrated exasperation with everything that put Valgan on a level with millions of those who could never be Valgans, everything that stopped him living in his true Valgan way! Criticize!

Valgan thought he was exposing reality, and the defects it contained. But he was only exposing himself.

"There, now can you see?!" said Blikin's challenging, reproachful look. "That's what you get by admitting Valgan and the like! You sent for him. And look whom you sent for! Look where you've brought him!" Valgan's self-exposure strengthened Blikin's confidence in his own essential rightness.

Bakhirev, listening to Valgan, suddenly took umbrage, almost to his own surprise. Look at those factories that were built, and in such years—difficult years, and to listen to him they're nothing! He flings mud at one and all on the pretext of a noble fight against defects! Turned into an "ultra-left." That kind can go from one extreme to the other just to curry favour. All he wants is to show off, get ahead of others, never mind in what direction. . . .

Memory brought him a picture of that night in March, the ominous glow over the mourning banners, and Valgan's enthusiasm amounting to a real envy of the dead man's immortality.

Betrayed it all without a thought. Wiped everything out with one stroke, thought Bakhirev.

On that night in March Bakhirev had asked himself, what will fall away after that death and what will remain? Now he answered: You, Valgan, will fall away, and you, Blikin, and those like you. But those like Chubasov, Kurganov, Grinin, Dasha and Seryozha—they will remain!

In them he saw the people formed by the socialist epoch; they had been born of it and had become its decisive force. But who were Valgan and Blikin? He remembered Zimin's words, "Weeds on neglected spots." Wasn't that putting it too mildly? No. The more complex life became, the more important those neglected spots; the more innocent weeds looked, the more dangerous they were. Danger could develop into tragedy and tragedy into catastrophe, if one failed to see it in time, if one was deceived by clever mimicry, if one took the Valgans and Blikins for the real bearers of the Communist idea. Tillers of the soil are not duped by the innocent, heavenly colour of cornflowers!

Meanwhile, Valgan went on talking until the flow of his involuntary self-exposure was cut short by the chairman.

"Comrade Valgan, why do you have to paint everything in the blackest shades? According to you, there is nothing at all in the region—only scorched earth and scene-painters' villages?"

That sobered Valgan.

He looked about him. There was nothing even remotely resembling the former sympathetic attention. He understood. He'd gone too far. He'd better smooth it over. He raised his hand, clenching and opening the fingers, he gasped for air, appealed, insisted "I am honest! Devoted!"

But his time had passed, the floor was given to Kurganov. Still bewildered but conscious now of impending disaster, Valgan left the rostrum. What had happened? Why? When? Everything had started so well! When had it gone wrong? Could it all be—finished?

In the same way a sniper, after taking excellent aim, betrays himself with a single incautious movement; and even before he has time to sense any pain he suddenly sees blood and in bewilderment and growing horror asks himself, "What? When? Why? Can it be blood? Can this be the end?"

Kurganov, clumsy and awkward but still smiling, came forward.

"...I've been accused of not knowing theory. But knowing isn't just a case of learning a thing off by heart. Knowing means applying it to concrete situa-



tions. The potatoes were left in the ground. There weren't enough people and there weren't the harvesting machines. The cost of harvesting is high. So we got out the big ones, and let the pigs have the small ones. And with the grain. . . . In low-lying places the ground was wet, the combines wouldn't work there. And this year the only crop was what we could get from just those places. So we reaped with scythes. They told me that's not according to the proper theory, but to my mind, theory needs to be backed up with grain. If there's no grain, the theory doesn't get you far. In the farming districts theory has to be checked by the speed with which the crops, the milk, the eggs increase."

You were much more eloquent that time at the swamp, thought Bakhirev, troubled for Kurganov. And you had theory too. In theory you're stronger than a dozen Blikins. Why don't you show now what you're worth? Why don't you shine?

But like Bakhirev himself, Kurganov made not the slightest effort to shine. The truth was his strength.

That one's jumped into the limelight, thought Valgan, surprised and envious. How's he managed it? Why didn't I manage it?

"Well, Comrade Grinin, now it's your turn," said the chairman with especial friendliness.

That's the one, that's the one I should have held to, not Blikin, thought Valgan again in chagrin. But what is there in him? Why is he so much at home here? For the first time he really looked at Grinin. The sinewy body of an old worker, a face that seemed very ordinary at first glance. But if you looked more closely, you saw that special, quiet firmness which comes from a hard-working life well lived. The dried-up face with its rare but soft smile, the exact, restrained gestures, the laconic speech showed the second secretary of the regional committee to be a man tested and trustworthy. Valgan realized this and again wished regretfully that he had cultivated him. The more restrained Grinin's criticisms of Blikin, the greater their effect. Briefly he touched on the tractor works.

"The benefit of the changes made by Bakhirev were felt a month later. The rise in July indices should not be placed to the credit of the director, they arose from the progressive measures of the chief engineer," said Grinin, without even raising his rather husky voice. If he had stormed, attacked, got excited, it would have been less injurious, less fateful for Valgan than this casual phrase dropped in passing, as it were. Swept him aside like a bundle of old rags without a glance, with no explanation, just as a matter of course. And not another word about Valgan. But he spoke a great deal about Bakhirev. "At first, so they said at the factory, he went too far, and tried to do things alone, too. That cost the factory dear. But he realized his mistake and regretted it. He was the first to see the design was wrong. The new design was worked out thanks to his efforts. He was removed from his position but stayed at the works—as shift engineer. He would agree to anything if only he could help put things right. It wasn't only the fixtures of the counterbalances that were changed. Comrade Bakhirev changed too. His prestige doesn't come from window-dressing. It's earned in

work and struggle. The factory values the chief engineer for his fighting spirit and the progressiveness of his main idea in production."

"And what's that idea? Your 'the director a smith, the chief engineer a smith'?" smiled the thin man at the table, his eyes warm; that smile said much, and evidently many knew what he meant. Grinin flushed like a girl, and his lean face turned younger and glowed as if from some inner light. The ardour within him, which reserve or shyness restrained, broke through in that girlish blush.

"Yes . . . that idea."

"Won't you explain?"

"The idea of factory specialization and co-operation. I've been trying for a long time to have our Kirov Works made the regional smithy. That's something we've been thinking of; a huge foundry works, and in it. . . ." His eyes narrowed and he spoke in that clear, happy tone in which children recite the flourish to their favourite fairy-tales, "in it the director is a smith and the chief engineer is a smith, all the shop managers are smiths and all the workers are smiths too! Smiths all round! Then you'd have forging worth while!"

They were actually discussing a future reorganization of factories! Valgan could not understand how it had come about that he was left out of these plans for the future, while the shift engineer Bakhirev was in the middle of them.

Grinin finished.

"Let us hear Comrade Bakhirev."

After that silence of his, Bakhirev had not thought they would want to hear anything he had to say, and was not prepared. He rose hesitantly. Grinin had smoothed the way for him; there was an atmosphere of intent, benevolent interest. Should he take advantage of it, say why he had not left the factory, why he had wrestled with the tests in his free time? The idea did touch the outer fringe of his mind for an instant and then vanished completely. The main thing. He must speak of the main thing. He strode forward quickly, knocking against a chair as he passed. He halted by the table and started off by reaching up and giving his tufts of hair the hardest tug he could. Satisfied that his scalp was firmly fixed, he began to speak in his usual manner—awkwardly, stolidly, without any introductory phrases, only trying to put the main thing as concisely as possible.

"In its present form the factory has no prospects of development. The production capacity has outgrown the existing form of organization. Further introduction of advanced techniques cannot have the required effect without reorganization. Line production can exert its full progressive influence only if employed for production on a maximum scale. We must create all the conditions for this mass production."

He was excited, he was in a hurry to say all that he had been pondering over for years, and noted with surprise, I'm putting forward pure theses of political economy. That's no good.

It bothered him, but anxious not to waste words, he continued in the same way.

"Line production can exert its full progressive influence only if employed to the maximum on a mass scale. Give production of a number of secondary items over to specialized factories! Use the freed space and potentialities to increase the scale of the basic product. Mass production! Specialization! Co-operation! Those are the main goals!" he cried, then took fright at himself and thought, now I'm shouting slogans! . . . Thirty years before, he and other Comsomol members had chanted, "For industrialization! Hurrah! For co-operation! Hurrah!" He wanted to stop himself, but the slogans seemed to leap from his lips of themselves. Badly worried by his attack of sloganitis, he flung a distraught glance at the Party leaders—how were they standing it? To his surprise, they stood it with patience. Probably they knew a man could speak in slogans for two reasons—because he had no words or thoughts of his own, or because all his inner force was concentrated to the utmost on the realization of those slogans. In the second case, slogans too could be filled with passion, like the endless repetition of the words "I love you." Evidently the people at the table realized that this was the second case. They listened sympathetically, although the hint of a smile trembled sometimes in eyes or at the corners of lips. It was difficult not to smile as this huge, shaggy, red-faced, perspiring man cried passionately yet with a look of fright "Specialization! Co-operation!"

Encouraged by the sympathy and understanding he felt, Bakhirev became calmer and felt with relief that the spate of slogans was dying away and he was gradually returning to a more normal mode of speech. "We have been making whole tractors—from bushings, nuts and connecting rods to Diesel engines. In Britain one factory makes bushings for the whole country. And why should we make connecting rods for ourselves and for others too? Those con-rods are a pain in the neck. When one factory makes everything, from bushings and con-rods to Diesels, it's not a factory, it's more like a primitive husbandry! Perhaps we can stand it, but the Diesels won't. They won't stand bushings, beds, and stove-lids alongside them. Up jumps their cost and down goes their quality. It's not I that demand things, it's the Diesels themselves!"

At first they had expected him to explain, to excuse, justify himself. But he had quite forgotten about himself. The reality, the sincerity of this was apparent. What he said stirred those who heard. It was not the fate of Bakhirev, it was the future of the factory that quite naturally held the centre of attention.

Keeps pounding away like one of his own Diesels, thought Kurganov, glad for Bakhirev's sake. And he convinces them! Convinces with his thousands of revolutions a minute, with the horse-power he develops.

When he finished and Blikin was given the floor for the concluding speech, it was like sliding back from the future to the past.

It was only Blikin who saw no future. He saw annihilation. Who had done it? He asked himself the question, looking round those marble walls in leave-taking. If the statue of the Commodore had come to life to defeat him, he would have understood and submitted<sup>1</sup>. But there were ordinary people sitting there.

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<sup>1</sup> The reference is to Pushkin's poem *The Stone Guest*.



People of various kinds. People who searched and probed. People quite at their ease. Even good-humoured. Did they themselves understand what was taking place?

In the first moments after death even a short body seems to take on stature; even an insignificant face becomes more significant, clear-cut. Something of the kind happened to Blikin. He appeared taller, his round shoulders rose and straightened, his features became clearer, harder, as though the bones stood out beneath the shrunken flesh.

A corpse, a corpse, thought Bakhirev. Blikin himself partly realized it, but still he hoped against hope. . . . Ride out the storm. . . . Wait. . . . Hold out.

Slowly, stubbornly he passed through the hall in which the rising tide of life seethed. Here, the destinies of thousands were decided. Here faces flushed and foreheads were wet with sweat. Voices broke hoarsely or rang with the hardness of metal. The hall seemed to echo with the rumble of tractors, their complaints at their hideous mutilation, the whistles of factories demanding a constant flow, a mass scale, and the barely audible rustle of heavy ears of corn awaiting the harvesting machines. All of it demanded attention, all of it called for quick decision, all of it summoned to action. But Blikin heard nothing. With a mechanical semblance of importance he stalked up to the table, halted and took out a gold-stamped notebook. Again he sought salvation behind the usual barrier of words against the crushing pressure of life. The quotations that slipped one after another from his blue lips sounded strange, monotonous, dull, out of place.

"... the development of heavy industry ... the most difficult task ... requiring as is known enormous financial investment. . . . The Party stated explicitly that this demands serious sacrifices and that we must be prepared to make these sacrifices. . . ." Finally he closed his notebook but continued with the same dull monotony, "I consider it necessary to recall these basic theses of Marxism-Leninism to Comrades Valgan, Kurganov and Zimin. Yes, in order to build up the greatest structures of our epoch, we, the citizens, have to accept certain limitations and even certain privations. We must never forget that our aim is the greatness of communism, and what is great, demands sacrifice. Kurganov and Zimin cannot see wood for trees, they cannot see great aims for potatoes and mattresses."

He wanted to go on, but felt that words were vain; suddenly weak, he trailed back to his seat.

"Comrade Blikin has assumed the role of the only advocate of heavy industry," said the chairman ironically. "This is pure demagoguery. The Party puts heavy industry first, as it always has. As for sacrifices," and the irony in his voice gave way to a kind of bitter strength, "there are periods in the life of a country when sacrifices must be made for the sake of the future. Soviet people understand this. If they had not understood, if they had not been prepared to make these sacrifices, our industry would not have existed and half the world would now be under the heel of fascism. But some regard these sacrifices as a temporary necessity, a regrettable necessity which must be ended as soon as possible,

while others regard them as a law of nature which it is useless to think about and harmful to discuss. We hold to the first point of view."

The moment's silence which followed was tangible as the silence between salvoes. The voice was silent but its note of suffering shared with the people and pride in the people still echoed. Cloud shadows floated over the white marble, and Bakhirev's thoughts moved from one past war to another. . . . To pass through everything, overcome everything, stand firm through everything, and still be the bearer of unsullied ideals! Who would not be proud of such a homeland? This was the thought that glowed in all minds, softened all faces.

It was the chairman who broke the silence.

"Now about the disputable and the indisputable. There are no disputes where one opinion dominates. But where the decision lies with the many, there can always be arguments. However great one is, he is always less than the many. Argument is useful when those who argue have the same fundamental idea—public interest. But what are your basic interests, Comrade Blikin? What concerns you? You were not interested in the advance in backward districts. You were not interested in how the workers in the most difficult shop lived. Nor were you interested in such breakages as Soviet engineering had never seen before. What does interest you, then? The real life of the people, or dogma for the sake of dogma? I ask you, what transformed a small miscalculation in the design of counterbalances into a disaster? You do not answer. But I can answer for you. Indifference to the essence of things, indifference to the public well-being."

Blikin did not stir. He was utterly unlike himself. His face, greyish in the strong light, looked dead. There was none of the accustomed arrogant pose of the head, the piercing, impenetrable stare. His large body seemed paralyzed.

Valgan sat a few chairs away. Valgan was alive and thirsted for life. His face burned, his lips and cheeks twitched. "To live, live, live," said his bright piercing gaze. "To live, live, live!" said his clutching hands, his quivering nostrils, his half-open mouth. He caught at every word, seeking a path to salvation.

They were different, those two men, but Bakhirev felt that something intangible united them. What could it be? A premonition of disaster? Alienation from all that was the very fibre of life for the other people here? What united them now, and had united them in the past? On what was this identity of Valgan and Blikin based? Just in this, that both were indifferent to the essentials, to the life of the people. Valgan had hedged himself off with care for his own advancement, and Blikin with dogma. Both were cut off, isolated, each one in his own way.

But Bakhirev had no time for musing; the chairman turned away from Blikin and continued.

"Now for the most important thing, Comrade Blikin. Our aim. On our globe nine hundred million people live in a socialist society and sixteen hundred mil-

lion in a capitalist society. So far the score is not in our favour. We must give these nine hundred million a life that will make the sixteen hundred million want to live the same way. That is difficult. We are a young country, and we have constantly been compelled to defend our youth and our future with arms in hand. We have to think about metal, about heavy industry before we can think about butter and milk. But we shall cope with those matters too, just as we have coped with others. Communism is not fought for with atom bombs, it is fought for with the 'good weapons'—milk, butter and the daily bread of justice. But these good weapons can be used gallantly only by really gallant fighters." He turned to Bakhirev, his head somewhat on one side, and gave him a very straight look. "People have spoken of Comrade Bakhirev here, they have said he has become a good fighter. But I say he is still a bad fighter. He took advantage of the director's absence. Decided to change the whole factory all on his own. A real hero for you! Thanks to that heroism, thousands of tractors smashed up. Are you going to pay for those thousands of tractors by sentence of court, Comrade Bakhirev?"

Bakhirev said nothing. He would have been glad to pay to the end of his life if he could only make up for what had been done.

"You fought badly," the voice lashed him mercilessly, then as though in pity, a soft, friendly note came into it. "Your methods were bad. But your aim was correct." Bakhirev had barely time to seize on that momentary softening when the voice lashed him again. "They call you a gifted engineer, who can see many things better than others. You were the first to see the error in design. You could have prevented, forestalled what took place. How did you fight? Would you have put out tanks that fired on themselves? You'd have gone down in the fight before you'd have let them go! But a tractor is a weapon too, our weapon for good ends. And you are a fighter using it. A bad fighter. Up to now a bad fighter." The three words "up to now" gave Bakhirev hope. "And why bad? The fact that you have thousands of tractors to back you—that you understood. But the fact that each one of us Communists is backed by nine hundred million people—plus millions more all over the world—that you forgot! Reckon up for yourself how much more fighting spirit you need! . . . Well, Comrades, that's all. We shall make no organizational decisions. The question of leadership in the regional committee must be decided by a plenary meeting of the committee. And we shall base ourselves not so much on the past as on the future. We shall base ourselves on the puddings." Smiling, the chairman again came right down to earth in the way that had so outraged Blikin and pleased Bakhirev. "The one who makes the pudding that proves best in the eating, that's the one who's right."

Half an hour later Bakhirev was walking along Okhotny Ryad. Tulips from the south and bird-cherry from more northerly regions were being sold on the street. The warm sunshine and cool breeze, the lofty arching blue of the sky



and the reflections of a darker blue in the windows, the stream of cars and the balloons carried by children all gave him a sense of seething, overflowing life. The trees in the public gardens with their pale, unfolding leaves cast no shade; those leaves were almost transparent, they glistened as though their sole purpose was to draw the light and shimmer in many shades of green. These sun-filled gardens and freshly watered streets, the flowers, the people in springtime clothes and springtime spirits seemed to make the whole world young. Again Bakhirev remembered that night in March 1953 when he had driven through these streets with Valgan. He remembered the aura of death, the dead flowers in wreaths and that trembling, weeping cord within him. Grief, depression, confusion, unsureness, alarm. The same streets. But how different. Today, too, he was agitated, but not from confusion or unsureness. He was agitated because he could feel the breath of two-and-a-half thousand million people; and checked every idea, every plan, in the light of their eyes. I fought for tractors, he thought, but how? By narrow, technical means. But practical questions of technique and my duty as a member of the Party merge, they cannot be separated. Try to separate them in Roslavlev, or Chubasov, or Vasili Vasilyevich—in any real fighter with the good weapons. For Bakhirev that “good weapon,” the tractor, was dearer than all the tanks in the world.

A girl with a sprig of bird-cherry in her hair was selling fruit sodas. He raised his glass and like a boy, said to the girl, the sky, the sun, “Your good health!”

Foolish, to stand at the corner of Okhotny Ryad drinking to the universe in fruit soda, but the girl only laughed and asked coquettishly, “And what shall I wish you?”

“That it should always be the way it is now!” he said, and as his mind pictured all that day with its overflowing life, he repeated within himself, yes, the way it is now.

For a moment he felt a vague apprehension—what should he do to make it always like that? He walked on, thinking of all he had experienced recently, of himself, of his friends. There had been so much indecision, confusion, argument, so many disputes, misunderstandings, errors!

Why, even today he had been seized by doubts and had even felt a certain sympathy for Valgan. And of all people on earth, he was the one who ought to see through Valgan! But nevertheless, he had been uncertain. It was difficult to separate truth from lies. And those sitting at the big table had hesitated, too. But Valgan was only a grain of sand among all the multitude of problems they had to decide! Was it possible to live and act firmly, accurately, correctly—always, everywhere and in everything? It might seem easy to those who do nothing themselves. He who seeks great aims knows the cost of searching and striving. . . . But when this searching and striving is led by real Communists, when they can talk with live interest about Anna Luzhkova, then millions of Luzhkovas rise to stand alongside them, and the impossible becomes possible. And again he said to himself, “Let it always be like this!”

## THE OLD AND THE NEW

Over a month had passed since Bakhirev had to all intents and purposes taken over from Valgan. Two days ago he had been formally appointed director. He was now expecting Roslavlev's appointment as chief engineer and the arrival of Shatrov, who had been urgently summoned.

The counterbalances were being fixed according to the new method in both works.

So many changes had come about in a short time, that people already looked back on the trouble with the counterbalances like a sickness of early childhood.

Bakhirev's state of mind was that of a man who had been struggling for a long time up a steep slope, expecting a wonderful view into the far distance when he reaches the top. At last he gets there, exhausted and happy. The long-expected view is even grander, more intoxicating than he imagined, but away on the horizon new peaks rise, still higher, still more difficult to scale. Joy mingles with perplexity; old wounds still smart, he pants still from the steep climb, yet the far horizons call. Former obstacles have disappeared and new ones are not yet clearly defined.

Blikin had fallen ill, Grinin was taking his place. It was clear to all that at the first plenary meeting after Blikin recovered he would be freed from his duties and Grinin would be elected first secretary. The little secretary of the Ukhabsinsk district committee had won general respect in the region and the wish that he would be elected secretary for agricultural matters on the regional committee was becoming unanimous.

For Bakhirev, the regional committee had ceased to be a source of reprimands and menacing decisions, it was a magnet. He was constantly seized with a wish to ring up Grinin, to talk to Grinin, to ask Grinin's advice. Bakhirev was drawn to just those qualities in Grinin which he himself lacked—toughening Party experience and that combination of keen vision and firm balanced reasoning which comes with mental maturity.

He came home in the evening, looked at the telephone and fought the temptation to ring up. He had telephoned twice the day before yesterday, he remembered. If every director kept ringing up, when would Grinin ever find time to get his work done? So Bakhirev sighed, and turned his back on the telephone; and just at that moment it rang. He picked up the receiver and heard the familiar voice.

"Dmitri Alexeyevich?"

"This is a miracle," cried Bakhirev. "I was just standing here wondering whether I should ring up or not."

"I called you twice during the day."

"I wasn't in my office, I was in the shops."

"And the right place to be! How are things going there? What about the engine shop? Have you found anyone to take Roslavlev's place?"

"We haven't picked one out yet."

"People aren't just 'picked out,'" said Grinin. "They have to be looked for. Search for them and then develop the necessary qualities. What do you think of Osipov?"

"But he's a toolmaker. If we upset the tool shop we're chopping at a branch that supports the whole works."

They talked of the tool shop and the engine shop, and Bakhirev complained about the subsidiary factories.

"They didn't make the deliveries on time, well, so they had to pay a fine. But that's no penalty—it all comes from state funds anyway. It's just a transfer from one pocket to the other. What's the use of that? If fines came from our own pockets, now—the directors' pockets—! After all, we're materialists in theory, but here we suddenly turn into pure idealists!"

All the time he was answering the secretary's questions about the engine shop, the steel furnaces, the innovators in the pattern shop, Bakhirev was sure Grinin had not rung him up about these things alone. And he was right.

"With quotas and machines you're on the right track," said Grinin towards the end of their talk. "Only there's no 'hey-presto' in these things. It takes more than director's orders to increase labour productivity and lower costs."

Bakhirev got the point: Grinin was afraid the new director might try to rush things too much.

"Right—put me straight and keep me straight," he said, "Let's have all the guiding directives."

"You got those from Grandad Kornei. One director sees himself as a ruling prince, another as the agent of the people. And irrespective of personal qualities of the first, the second will always work more wisely."

"That's Grandad Kornei's advice you're giving me. What about your own?"

"My own is this: progressive technology is your 'Samson's hair,' your strength. And if you always remember, day and night, that a high level of technology is possible only when you maintain the closest contact with the workers, then you'll find everything goes all right."

"Don't worry," said Bakhirev, "I've got Chubasov beside me. And I tripped up that way before, too."

He put down the receiver. A fine rain filled the darkness outside, leaves heavy with moisture rustled, the wet asphalt gleamed and gave off a cool breath. Grinin had said nothing in particular, perhaps, yet to Bakhirev that late call was like a warm, friendly hand-clasp.

The children were in bed and Katya was listening to the wireless, her hair down, when the door-bell rang. Bakhirev went to the door and saw Valgan, loaded down with bundles.

"I'm leaving tomorrow," said Valgan, puffing a strong smell of spirits into Bakhirev's face. "I've come to say good-bye."

Why had he come here? What did he want? It was a queer visit, and unpleasant. Grinin's friendly words were still in Bakhirev's ears, the day had been



full of work, with clear purpose aimed at the future. And his thoughts, too, had been impatiently reaching out to that future—a seething, healthy future which left behind past pain and past mistakes. But now Valgan had brought the recent past with its wounds and bitterness into the room with him.

Shock and drink made Valgan's face seem strangely larger, and quite immobile. The inner fire burned more hotly than before, but the face was set like ice. In the ordinary way he made no particular effort to restrain himself, he let his mood have its way—angry, laughing, shouting or joking. But now care and caution, the effort of constant self-control had bottled up the flames seething within him.

His eyes were glassy, their yellow glow seemed to have faded, but the lids were half lowered, the gaze fixed and the pupils peeped out warily like tiny animals from some deep den. A smile, clear and frankly bitter, was fixed on his face.

Can't hit a man when he's down, thought Bakhirev and with a sudden rush of pity said hastily, "Come in, come in, man. What are you standing there for?"

Valgan entered with his fixed smile and let his eyes wander round Bakhirev's home.

"Soon—soon you'll be moving from this place to mine—to the director's apartment."

He went into the study and set bottles of cognac and vodka on the table. "Let's have a drink together—a parting drink."

"Katya, bring us something to eat, whatever you've got in the house," Bakhirev called to his wife.

While Katya laid the table, Valgan stood by the open window.

Bakhirev knew that some days before, Valgan had been expelled from the Party, for deceiving and misleading it. The case of the counterbalances had been a thread leading to a whole skein. There were the artificially lowered quotas. There was all that shuffling when the director, in league with Ukhanov, had given orders to include incomplete tractors in the list of completed ones and by this means had passed the target figure. It appeared, too, that in the spoilage figures given in reports, the permitted percentage allowed for in plans had been deducted.

Bakhirev knew all that now, yet nevertheless, when he looked at Valgan standing motionless by the window, dislike gave way to pity. A fine rain was falling and the night was very dark, which made the lights of the works seem particularly bright. From his window the entrance archways could be seen, and the illuminated star over the Palace of Culture.

"Lights. . . " said Valgan hoarsely and stretched out his hand to them with an uncertain gesture very far indeed from the usual Valgan style. "The works. . . . There it is—the works."

Bakhirev wanted to say something encouraging, to drive away painful thoughts.

"There's a better works than ours in Kurtsovsk, where you're going. The last word in engineering."

That yellow gaze, burned out and faded, tore away from the window, glided over Bakhirev's face and fastened greedily on the bottle. Bakhirev poured out a full glass. Valgan drained it but took nothing to eat. He turned back to the window and answered Bakhirev's words wearily.

"Yes . . . there's a works—there—too."

"And what a works!" Bakhirev took up the theme stubbornly. "Here we've got to reorganize everything. But there it's being built, a new place. That's where all your experience will be useful."

"Yes. My experience. I came here in 'forty-four. Ruins. . . . Dead ruins. . . . Smashed bricks. . . . Glass melted and solidified into clots. . . . Glass can clot too, just like blood."

There was something strangely moving in his voice, the whole atmosphere was strange. Night. Rain. The lights. The sadness in those lynx eyes.

How can I help him, thought Bakhirev. Maybe in this state, vodka really is the best comforter?

Pitying the man, he filled the glass again. Valgan drank off the second glass as impatiently as the first.

"Don't worry, I shan't take too much. I can drink, too. I can do anything!" The effect of the drink was noticeable, however, and the colour was brighter on his cheeks. "Yes. Glass, dead glass—even that can clot like blood."

With drunken persistence he clung to this picture. But Bakhirev with equal but deliberate stubbornness drew him away from the subject.

"You've worked hard. That's something you know how to do. And that ability to work is still with you."

"Oh yes, I've got that. How we worked here! Lived in dugouts, got up with oil lamps—just wicks in saucers of oil, went to bed by moonlight." Valgan was livelier now and his speech obediently followed the channel into which Bakhirev had diverted it. "I remember when the first batch of new machine tools arrived. We went to the station to meet them, all carrying flowers. Ordinary wild flowers—dandelions and buttercups, they grew everywhere among the ruins. Now the factory garden is magnificent—roses and dahlias. But I remember, I remember those garlands of dandelions on our first universal milling machines. . . ." As he spoke, pity and a desire to help surged up more strongly in Bakhirev. "There, there it is!" Valgan pointed at the lights outside. "A phoenix risen from the ashes! And these hands did it!" The dark, trembling fingers stretched out to the darkness, the rain. "I had a finger in everything. Those arches—I made them! The shops—I made them as well! Even the flower beds by the entrance—I saw to them! You love it too. You were taken off your job, driven out, but you remained. Why d'you think I've come to you now? We've changed roles. . . ." A tone of mockery or cynicism mingled with the torrent of lofty speech. "So as an exchange of experience, so to speak—" Valgan laughed—a choked, soundless laugh, as though his throat was closed "Because I—I'm to go to Kurtsovsk—a bit of a town—as an ordinary engineer. . . . A private in a general's uniform. You get that? I've been given a room on Mudhole Street.

Why, the name alone's enough!" He laughed again—an angry, drunken, choking laugh and refilled his glass.

"Do you want to stop here?" asked Bakhirev.

"Nev-er! I shall not stay. But I shall return! I shall return when I am called back. Do you think Valgan's finished? You think he's dead and buried?" He straightened for a moment, the old metallic ring came back into his voice, the thick lashes lifted and the burning, drunken eyes bored into Bakhirev's face. "They'll come to fetch me yet! They'll come! They'll get their senses back some time!" Before Bakhirev's eyes he became the old Valgan again, with bold gaze and head high; only the tension of muscles in face and body was unlike the former panther-like softness, the lips were swollen and flaccid with drink and the laugh was dull, choked. "But Blikin, Blikin!" he continued, laughing again, with that laughter not his own. "Five years he sheltered behind my back. The ministerial challenge banner—that was Valgan! The machine tools for the Red October Works—Valgan! The report in the *Pravda*—Valgan again! The wrought-iron railings for the park and the embankment—all Valgan! I was everywhere!"

But what are you, really? That thought filled Bakhirev's mind. He was in an impasse, unable to reconcile the real zest for work with greed for personal benefit, love of the factory with self-love. Bakhirev wanted to understand who and what this man was, not for the man's own sake—he was going away—but because of those who remained. Because of people whom he had taught. Valgan's qualities would live on in others, although perhaps not in such a pronounced form. Bakhirev wanted to see, to recognize the faintest hint of them. It was his job to lead many thousand fighters with the "good weapons." And good weapons must be made by the right kind of hands. Everything which could come to be a hindrance must be studied, learned and rendered harmless. A doctor must see the disease at its height, at least once, so as to recognize it in the future and prescribe for it at its very first symptom. Bakhirev felt he must let Valgan talk on, to the point of complete self-revelation, in order to see the danger in everything with the slightest similarity. Up to now Bakhirev had guided the talk, trying to lend it some semblance of decency. Now he let it go its own way. He had filled Valgan's glass out of pity, now he did it to speed up the full disclosure. Who and what are you, Valgan?

"Who sheltered him? I did!" Valgan continued. "Like a worm he fed on my love for the works, on my energy. What could he do of himself? Write resolutions? But I could work! I could do anything. . . . Betrayed and sold me. . . . Threw mud at me in the Central Committee. . . . But who made me what I am? Once I was a Comsomol member, too, and worked in a factory, and looked for more efficient ways, new ways. Betrayed me, the swine. . . ." He drank again, laughed his choked laugh and continued with growing passion. "I went through my works to say good-bye. . . . They didn't even look at me. . . . Not long ago they trembled, snapped to attention when they saw me! Lickspittles! Ukhanov saw me, he shuffled a bit and made off! You see to it that he's—" Valgan made a movement as though cracking an insect on the table with his thumbnail. "You're not a lickspittle. You're a wild beast but you're not a



lickspittle. . . . That's why Valgan came to you. You think I'm abusing you? I'm praising you! You're a wild beast, you're a swine, but you're not—"

"That's enough!" Bakhirev rose. He really had had enough.

"All right," said Valgan appeasingly. "All right! Everybody's the same, just the same. Not swine. I'm not a swine, you're not a swine, he—Blikin, he's not a swine, and they—all those like Ukhanov, they're not swine either. Everything's done in the sacred name of self-preservation! The law of self-preservation is the highest law. Even a louse preserves itself, even a louse bites, even a louse wants to—exist. Everything wants to exist! And I want it, too. . . ." He leaned over to Bakhirev and in a hot whisper, syllable by syllable, he concluded, "I want to exist!"

Fear and avidity were in that whisper.

It was Valgan, and yet it was not Valgan sitting before Bakhirev. There was the same general's uniform, the same glittering decorations, the same moist, sparkling eyes, the same white teeth under the same red lips, but there was none of the resolute, energetic expression which had welded all this shine and glitter into one whole. Now everything had fallen apart, everything lived an independent life and destroyed itself in the attempt. Valgan had lost weight and now the general's uniform hung in loose creases from the thin, slightly stooping shoulders, and the medals slid one over the other. The bold, fixed smile in which his mouth seemed glued was contradicted by the panic in his eyes. The feverish flush and the sharply carved lines of his face accorded ill with the confusion, greed and humiliation of his expression. The whole look of the man was vague, as though the outlines were blurred, and something animal, degraded, almost degenerate had crept into it.

Bakhirev felt nauseated, but his urge to understand this contradictory being to the very end was stronger than his disgust.

"Feeling triumphant—huh?" said Valgan with a crooked smile. "I felt triumphant, too, when the Ministry appointed me with just as much pomp as you, now."

"It's not the Ministry that's made me director," said Bakhirev, after a moment's thought.

"Who, then?"

"People. . . ."

"Chubasov and Grinin, eh?"

Bakhirev remembered Olga Semyonovna who had supported him, and Vasil Vasilevich, and Dasha, and those who had helped him when he was shift engineer, and the election to the Party bureau, and the conference hall of the Central Committee. And in a trembling voice he answered, "Many people."

"And d'you know what you hooked them with?"

"Hooked who?"

"The workers. . . . I used to go through the shops and all heads turned, as if they were on a single string. Why, they worshipped me! But yesterday, I went through the foundry—might have been a shadow passing. Might not have been there at all! No better than Ukhanov—" He broke off, alarmed by the anger

in Bakhirev's eyes. . . . "All right, I'll say no more. But what did you hook them with? Made yourself one of 'em. Told them they're the salt of the earth. The masters! Said you couldn't do anything without them."

"Wait a minute." Again Bakhirev found it impossible to keep silent. "You're trying to sell the idea of universal foulness. Rascals always try to make out others are as bad as they are. Because then a rascal's as good as an honest man. But honest men have no use for that kind of levelling off. You put the workers on the same level as Ukhanov. . . . You were just going to call them foul names. . . . But the other day I read through some of your orders and appeals. 'In the name of our great country.' 'We vow over the immortal tombs. . . .' 'Our glorious workers. . . .' To whom did you address those?"

Again Valgan laughed soundlessly. In the semi-darkness of the study his face appeared contorted. He began rapidly stroking his chin and the gesture betrayed a nervous uneasiness, as though something dark seethed within him, rising, seeking an outlet.

Everything's clear, thought Bakhirev. Time to put an end to this. Get rid of him. And air the room.

"Let's tell the truth and shame the devil," said Valgan. "You don't have to be afraid of me. I'm just trash to be kicked away. You've crushed me and smashed me. No need for you to be afraid of me now. Let's swap some home truths. Don't you trim your sails to the wind too? 'Initiative of the masses'! Why, you're on the make yourself! Push your way up quicker than I could! And know better how to use the whip and the carrot, what's more!"

For an instant the foulness within this drunken, half-crushed creature came to the surface, and the stench almost choked Bakhirev.

"Get out," he said. "You think everyone's like yourself. You've drunk too much. Better go home."

Valgan's lips closed submissively. Valgan went to the window and leaned out, letting the wind and rain cool his face.

"Just one more look. You can see it better from here." Raindrops rolled down his face. "All the arguments we had when the star was put up," he said in a quiet, almost sober voice. "What colour should it be? Red? Fiery? Many-coloured?. . . I'm sorry to leave that star too. . . . The star? Even the clock on the square. . . . All right, I'm going, I'm going. . . ."

He turned. Before Bakhirev stood a man suffering unjustly—sensitive, wise, buffeted by life. His grieved eyes could not leave the lights.

"I'm going, I'm going," he repeated mechanically, and it was clear that in this moment nothing existed for Valgan except the pain of parting, except these factory lights, the illuminated archways, the star over the club and the clock on the square.

With difficulty he tore his eyes away and followed Bakhirev silently out into the hall. But there, in the dim light, his human grief for the factory melted away, his nervous tension slackened, his strength left him for a moment and the drink took full possession. Again he muttered bitterly, angrily, "Me—Valgan! In Mudhole Street!. . . For me—it's not even existence!" His fingers dug

into Bakhirev's arm as he whispered distinctly into his face. "But I — *I want to ex-ist!*" Those fingers, hard as claws, would have dug into any throat to gain him the possibility to "ex-ist" in the way he deemed fitting for Valgan.

"Greenflies exist. People live," said Bakhirev. "Why have you let yourself sink into this rotten condition? Nobody's stopping you from working."

Bakhirev had seen people in a much worse situation. He had given evidence in defence of a man unjustly sentenced. During the war he had seen young men mutilated, he had seen men in the prime of life writhing in their death agony. But none of these—the man sentenced, the man mutilated, the man at the point of death—had lost their human dignity. Each was conscious of duty or achievement, love of family and country, interest in events, faith in people. But Valgan seemed to have nothing. Knowing no inner values, he had nothing left when those outer trappings he had so eagerly grasped fell from him. A room on Mudhole Street meant the collapse of his whole life and philosophy. Bakhirev understood now why Valgan had come knocking at his door. He had nowhere to go. He had surrounded himself with those whom he called lickspittles. And they had acted as such. When disaster came, they fled. And in panic, he had come to Bakhirev.

Valgan put on his general's greatcoat, getting his arms into the sleeves with some difficulty.

"I'm leaving tomorrow. . . . What about a lorry for my things?" he said with a humble smile. "May I have a lorry? Or don't I get anything now?"

Bakhirev's face twisted in shame for him.

"We'll load your things and put them on the train. What d'you think people are? If you don't like the job in that place, if you want to come back to the factory, or anywhere in these parts, the town or the region, write and let us know. After all, you can work, that's a fact, damn you! You're a human being, after all."

"Well, thank you, thank you." Valgan blinked his long lashes, but there was something artificial about his emotion. He was evidently sorry he had been so frank.

"Forget all that—what I said here. You can understand what I'm feeling like. I don't know myself what I'm saying. Life's difficult, difficult. . . ."

He held up the difficulty of life like a screen before his incautious frankness. His shoulders slumping wearily, he slowly descended the stairs—a quiet man buffeted by life's harshness wearing the halo of past services, with restrained sorrow in the lines of his well-moulded mouth.

At last he was gone, and Bakhirev flung the window wide open. He even wanted to throw away the glass Valgan's lips had touched. Could one entrust the "good weapons" to those clutching fingers which had so greedily caressed his own chin? Yet those fingers were skilful, strong, indefatigable. There was much that they could do. And in general, this complex, contradictory man for whom his own magnificence, his own well-being came first of all—he could still do much. He could work devotedly for days on end, he could love the factory



and even grieve, thinking of the dandelions gathered among ruins that decorated the first universal milling machine.

When a man like Valgan lives one life with a big group of people all working together, lives with their eyes upon him, controlling him, then the egoist weakens, crawls into the depths and loses its strength. But as soon as a man like this stops feeling himself one of the people, but above and outside their healthy influence, outside their vigilant control, the egoist grows stronger and stronger, constantly changing the face and the smile, the movements and ways, the way of living and even the way of thinking.

## *AT HOME AND AT THE FACTORY*

Katya had sent Bakhirev's refuge, the study couch to be re-covered the previous day. Bakhirev went into the bedroom. He lay on the very edge of the bed, carefully barricading himself with sheet and blanket. Katya did not repeat her previous offers of tenderness. His married life was becoming increasingly complex, and every day made it more difficult to explain his coldness.

Since he had become director, visits to that precious hut had become much more of a problem. He had less time, and there were more eyes observing him. When the shift engineer went by tram or on foot to the neighbouring housing estate, it attracted no particular attention. But when the new director crept through back streets or stood waiting at the tram stop, everybody who passed turned to look.

"No secret can be kept for ever," said Tina hopelessly. "Everything's discovered some day. And a director's secrets sooner than those of a shift engineer."

But he, riding the wave of success, intoxicated by the broad perspectives opening before him, lost all foresight and caution, and wished to see only the best side of things.

"We'll manage somehow for two or three years," he said. "Then Ryzhik and Anya will be older, better able to stand things, and they'll understand, then we can come out into the open. Because I've only one wife in this world—you."

He no longer came on foot, he drove to the main street of the estate, sent the car back and slipped down the back street. All this was difficult, but it was not of difficulties he wanted to think, his mind was full of the next day, eager for its work.

Bakhirev soon fell asleep. But Katya did not sleep. She lay listening to his even breathing. For almost a year now her husband had been like this. At first he had explained it by tiredness and all the worries and struggles at the works. But now happy days had come. The wife of the new director was surrounded by general respect. She was planning to move into the director's flat, to buy new furniture, to live in cushioned comfort. After her difficulties as wife of a shift engineer, a man driven out and disgraced, her new position tasted doubly sweet. Katya had expected happiness to bring her husband closer to her again. But

that had not happened. Something unnatural had entered their life, and did not go. She was a placid woman who sought only peace and quietness, and for a long time she managed to push her uneasiness into the background. But she had recently been talking to Roslavlev's wife, a tall woman, handsome as her husband, who managed to work at the factory, bring up her children, look after the house and even keep the upper hand in the family.

"Your Dmitri Alexeyevich as director and my Valentin as chief engineer—that's a mighty pair," she said. "The only thing that worries me is that they're both such hotheads. But they've got Chubasov beside them. And Grinin keeps an eye on the works, too."

"You needn't worry about Dmitri," Katya protested. "He's as quiet and calm a man you could find anywhere."

"Quiet and calm?" Roslavleva dropped her sewing. "He—quiet and calm? Why, you need only look at him. Those nostrils, those eyes, those brows! His very hair speaks for itself! He's so charged with electricity even his hair stands on end. And you call him quiet and calm!"

Nobody can be so thoroughly mistaken in people as wives and mothers sometimes are. Mistakes which arise from closeness of observation are the more striking, the bigger the object observed. To take in something really big, it is necessary to step back, to look from a distance, otherwise one sees only the part which is closest and may mistake it for the whole. This was the mistake Katya had made. She always saw her husband close at hand, in domestic life, when he was quiet, taciturn and balanced. His life at the factory was something very distant.

Roslavleva looked at her in wonder.

"You know, if I had a husband like yours and saw him *quiet*, I'd be off my head with worry. If you see a man like that quiet, it means he either hasn't let himself go yet and how he'll do it you don't know, or else that he has, but so far away from you that you don't know anything about it."

And Roslavleva did not know what was worrying Katya more every day—the unnatural way she was neglected as a woman. Katya decided to get rid of that hated study couch and sent it to be re-covered. A black nightgown with silver lace emphasized the whiteness of her arms and shoulders. New perfume breathed the sweetness of spring. Katya wanted to please, to be desired. She nestled close to her husband.

"Here we are, together again,"

He moved away from her.

"It's hot, Katya. . . . Too hot." And carefully tucked the sheet and quilt round and under him.

Katya felt insulted. But during the day he was kinder than usual to her and the children, and that quietened her. He was an excellent family man, after all. Roslavleva simply didn't understand him. He was heart and soul in his work and there, perhaps, he really was hot-headed. But he had always been reserved at home and now there was his age and the tremendous amount of work he had to do. In this way she lulled her fears. He fell asleep and she lay thinking.

He was so fond of his family, especially Ryzhik. And if he did not desire her as a woman, well, he was no longer a young man. And the work he did, it was enough to tire anybody out. . . . But nevertheless, in some hidden corner of her mind, uneasiness persisted.

In the morning she had a proposal to make.

"All the factory's going to the theatre this evening. Shall we go too?"

"Lord no, Katya. . . . I can't. I've got to be in town in the evening. . . . A meeting."

He had forgotten a clean handkerchief, and Katya ran out with it on to the balcony. Bakhirev was just getting into the car.

"Will you need me late this evening, Dmitri Alexeyevich?" the chauffeur was asking. "I have a class."

"Take me to the estate at seven, and that'll be all."

"The Red October? Where we went the day before yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Dmitri! Here's your handkerchief—catch!" Katya called down.

For a moment she paid no attention to the words she had heard, but then that hidden spark of uneasiness made her think about them. Dmitri had told her he would be in town this evening, and told the chauffeur he would be at the housing estate. What did it mean? But perhaps she hadn't understood properly? Oh, what did it matter? She had missed something, that was all. Or perhaps he'd got mixed up, it was a slip of the tongue.

Lies, evasions, secret visits to the housing estate were all so foreign to the very idea of her consistently calm, scrupulously honest husband, reliable as the ground under her feet, that Katya put the puzzle out of her mind.

It was a damp morning. A brisk shower had washed the square before the works. In that early hour there were few people about, only the janitors in their white aprons and gardeners busy about the flower beds. The sand on the paths was dark with the rain. As chief engineer, Bakhirev had never noticed that sand, but Valgan had paid attention to sand and flowers too. Although it was true, Valgan had sometimes not noticed the sledge-hammers used to correct the bushings. A good director must notice everything.

I can't help noticing sledge-hammers, thought Bakhirev. But sand and flowers—that's something I have to learn from Valgan.

He had worked long enough at the factory to be thoroughly accustomed to it, but now he entered it with a new attitude. As chief engineer he had been responsible mainly for machinery, as director he answered for the entire life of a factory where thousands of people worked.

Only three days before, that life had flowed along an old, well-worn channel, and Bakhirev had simply tried to accelerate its flow, to remove all bottlenecks, all hindrances. But now the very channel had to be defined for many years ahead. Countless tributary and accessory streams must be merged into one, and the whole current of productive work directed so that it would be of the maximum



benefit for communism. This was a new task. He could clearly see the solution for various parts of it, but how was it to be dealt with as a whole?

So far there's just one thing I know, he answered himself. The works has got to become one of the best tractor works in the world. Perhaps it's too bold, too self-confident to talk of an aim like that now, but we've got to live for it. And we can reach it only through the united effort of thousands.

He wanted to visit two shops in the morning. At the entrance to the pattern shop he met Seryozha and Dasha, who had grown and become very pretty, he noted. The tip-tilted nose was the same, so was the naive look of the wide-open eyes, but a restrained grace of movement and a womanly pride gave her the distinction of beauty. She was in a blue frock and a kerchief of the same colour, darkened with rain. She was holding out a package to Seryozha, saying, "But why not, Seryozha? It's from Mother."

Seeing Bakhirev she blushed but did not drop her eyes, and greeted him with easy, quiet dignity. This combination of the shy blush with quiet self-possession was so attractive that Bakhirev had a sudden thought: now, if my Anya had that. . . . He could not find the exact word for what he would like Anya to have.

"Well, young folks, how are you getting on?" he asked. "Are you still waiting for a place in the hostel, Dasha? I'll send for you in a day or two. We'll find something for you."

The colour deepened on her cheeks, even her smooth forehead turned pink.

"Thank you, Dmitri Alexeyevich. . . only I don't need a place in that hostel now. . . . I'll wait for something else."

"What'll you wait for now?"

She did not answer, but Seryozha put his arm round her shoulders.

"We're waiting for a room in the family hostel. Will you come to our wedding?"

Dasha shyly freed her shoulders.

"I sleep in Grandad's room," Seryozha continued, "and Mother's with the little ones in the other."

"There's quite a big kitchen, of course," Dasha said seriously. "But that's got everything in it. We'd be in the way."

"We must fix you up, we certainly must," said Bakhirev. "Who should we think of if not you? It's true, only one new house will be finished by the autumn, and that's a bachelor hostel with dormitories. Well, we'll have to work it out somehow. I'll send for you in a day or two and we'll talk it over together. And it's not only rooms I've got to talk over with you, Seryozha."

He went into the shop, touched by that couple sheltering in the entrance. Their damp, glowing faces, Dasha's package, her dark kerchief over the smooth golden hair seemed to hold something greatly desired, something which was gone or perhaps had never been. The youth which he had never had? He must certainly find them a place. But how was he to do it?

The roar of machines met him. Gurov's square head could be seen, grey against the festive colouring of the walls. No foundry had been built for the pattern shop. That was another thing to be decided—whether a special one should

be built or whether the entire chill casting process should be carried out in the main foundry, for the construction of which he was trying to get the sanction of the Ministry. He could not decide which was better and had come to discuss it with the engineers and workers. Opinions were varied and at first the discussion limped. Gurov's little eyes held suspicion and even a certain contempt as he looked at Bakhirev. A far cry from Valgan, he thought. Would he go about asking people what to do? He saw everything quicker and clearer than anyone else. But this one?

"May I ask you one thing?" Gurov inclined his square head to one side. "To do our own chill casting or merge with the general chill casting shop—what's your own definite opinion about it, your decision?"

Bakhirev frowned.

"The reason why I am consulting people is to establish a definite opinion. When that is done, the decision will follow."

"So that's how it is." Gurov's brows flew up. He was stung by the sharp tone of the reply.

"What did you think? The director isn't provided with decisions by a wise nanny!"

Sugrobin—and this man, thought Bakhirev. But what's to be done? Switch them over? Find someone to take Gurov's place? Or bridle him? Give him incentive to work for progress, a money incentive? But how?

"Dmitri Alexeyevich," said Seryozha. "Kornei Korneyevich told us something interesting. There were three factories in the country on experimental cost accounting. For instance, if a worker economized and there was a profit of, say, a hundred roubles over what was planned, then part of the money went to the state, but part went to the workers."

"Yes, and Grandad Kornei says that did a lot to help technical progress," Sinenky caught him up. "Why shouldn't we try something like that?"

"Well, I don't know, I've never thought about it," Bakhirev admitted frankly. "But one thing's certain, we've got to inject vitality into our internal factory cost accounting. But how's that to be done? We've got to think. Search for a way. Together."

Homes, chill casting, cost accounting, a system providing for material interest—a dozen problems at every step; compared with all this, how simple the riddle of the counterbalances tearing free seemed!

"A bad fighter! Up to now a bad fighter." Those words would be with him all his life.

On the stroke of nine he was in his office. One paper among those on his desk caught his eye at once. "Decision of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R.," he read. Here it was, he thought gladly, and read further. "The Council of Ministers instructs all farms using tractors, mark NN, to remove from the crankshafts all eight counterbalances the fixtures of which correspond to the superseded design."

Bakhirev looked at the sheet. The case of the counterbalances was finished. A sickness, like measles, over and done with. And not only that was gone, the

things which had given rise to it were leaving the works and the region—conceit and indifference, bureaucracy and complacency. He was on the point of putting the paper away, but thought better of it and slipped it under the glass on his desk. Let it stay there as a constant warning against those forces which had caused it to be written.

A telephone call from Moscow. Bakhirev recognized the old man's bass of Bochkaryev, the deputy minister.

After some questions about factory affairs, Bochkaryev suddenly asked, "And how's this, Comrade Director—I see you're starting to give your orders to Ministries and to the State Planning Organization too?"

For a moment Bakhirev was at a loss—what did he mean? Then he remembered. Ten days before, he had written to the Ministry and the State Planning Organization, pointing out that the programme for the works had been changed five times within the year, and demanding a guaranteed decision on the main programme questions not later than the 15th of July.

Faced with this ultimatum, Bochkaryev was both amused and angry.

"Up to now, Ministries and the State Planning Organization have set dates for factories. This is the first time a director's set dates for them. Not later than the fifteenth. Getting cocky, this director."

"But it's not I who sets the date. It's production," Bakhirev insisted. "I only pass it on, since I'm the first to hear it. I ask you, what are we supposed to do? We've got to start moving ahead, and our hands are tied. Are Diesels to be produced here at the works or not? Until the basic question's settled, we can't settle the everyday ones properly. How are we to distribute funds and material among the shops? What line shall we follow in planning them? We've got to decide all these things, and the Ministry holds us up."

For a long time Bochkaryev listened in silence.

"I can see one old man is going to regret insisting on you being made director," he said at last. "You're too quick for me."

"It's not me that's quick. It's production that wants to go ahead quickly. It's the voice of production. And what I've always liked about you is, that you can understand its voice better than most."

"Well, well, well, so he's learned to flatter too," growled Bochkaryev and softened at once. "There'll be a final decision today. I think we'll push it through—take the Diesels away from you." Bakhirev almost jumped for joy. "But to make up for that, the programme as a whole will be considerably increased."

"That's just what we want!"

The engineers had already gathered in the office. Ukhanov entered with them; he had returned from Moscow the previous day.

The predominant expressions in Ukhanov's face and voice were apprehension and sharp curiosity. He still could not understand how that "shaggy hippopotamus" had suddenly made the best leap of all. In Ukhanov's eyes Bakhirev was the cleverest of tricksters who had disguised himself as Ivan-the-Fool until the time came to spring.



"You're still in this room?" he marvelled. He simply could *not* understand the new director remaining in his modest chief engineer's office when he might have moved into Valgan's plushy magnificence long ago. Bakhirev did not trouble to explain that Valgan's exuberant taste irritated him almost beyond endurance.

"Yes, still here," he sighed. "But I'll have to shift tomorrow. He," with a jerk of the head towards Roslavlev, "is putting me out."

And what's going to happen to me, Ukhanov wondered fearfully. Will the "shaggy hippopotamus" chew me up?

Ukhanov had gone to Moscow to make a fight for demands signed by Valgan. He had managed to get the metal needed, but the Ministry had refused the new machine tools. Alarmed by this failure, Ukhanov had telephoned Bakhirev some days before, asking for advice and help.

"You're in Moscow," he heard Bakhirev's uncompromising voice, "and I'm here. So you do your job. And we'll judge it by the results."

He simply doesn't want to help me, thought Ukhanov. It's clear enough, and when I go back I'll get cracked over the head because I haven't done what I was sent for. . . . Now, in Bakhirev's office, he fully expected that his success with the metal would be passed over in silence while his failure with the machine tools would be used as a stick to beat him with. He waited for the blow to fall.

The engineers gathered. Bakhirev discussed various current matters and then turned to Ukhanov.

"It must be said that Comrade Ukhanov did brilliantly in getting us the metal. He arranged not only for the metal itself, but for its transport. If we get out of the tight spot we're in, it's thanks to his efforts. As for the machine tools, the Ministry refused them, and quite rightly, too."

Ukhanov was perplexed. For he well knew Valgan's ways. If the talk was of some success, Valgan would say, "I succeeded," or at the very least, "our achievement." But if it was a question of some defect, Valgan would find a scapegoat and thunder, "Your mistake will cost us dear." But, much to Ukhanov's surprise, Bakhirev did not take that line.

"The Ministry was right about the machine tools," Bakhirev continued. "In my opinion our chief trouble isn't so much lack of machinery as lack of proper organization. Mechanization without organization—that is what's wrong with us. From now on I would put the first aim of the works this way: 'Not two machines instead of one, but double the output from each.' Don't look so surprised. The engine shop tripled the output per machine. So every shop ought to manage double."

His tone brooked no argument, and his own work in the engine shop justified it.

When this question was settled, Ukhanov picked up the folder he had prepared as a lifebelt. He had not needed it to save him from going under, but he was not averse to using it as a springboard, to make a leap up in the eyes of the new director.

"Dmitri Alexeyevich, I've got some items worked out. Would you like to see?" And Ukhanov unfolded Bakhirev's "maximum plan" which he had previously treated with such mockery. The plan had been retyped and bound. Bakhirev smiled to himself—this man would never push his way in to a deputy minister with an old folder.

He was amazed by the ease, the natural manner with which Ukhanov today urged what he had condemned yesterday, without showing the slightest regret for former mistakes. He talked to Bakhirev with more curiosity and caution than to Valgan, but with the same respect and eagerness to please. He made Bakhirev think of a clown at the circus who turns somersaults in the air and lands lightly and smilingly on his feet before an admiring audience. He's quite prepared to turn just as many more somersaults, in any direction, thought Bakhirev. He can't be relied on. But he's ready to work and he's got energy. He can be put to good use.

Bakhirev pushed the plan aside.

"I don't think that'll do. Today the future of the works is being decided in Moscow. I can't say anything definite for the present. I don't know yet how things will be. . . . I can't say. . . . The only thing I do know is, that my former maximum plan will now barely reach the minimum."

Everything about Bakhirev was a surprise to Ukhanov—the "double from one machine" idea, the transformation of a maximum plan into a minimum plan, and the strange indecision which he did not conceal, an indecision behind which, one felt, great decisions were maturing.

## *THE COLLAPSE OF THE HUT*

Tina hurried along the back street through the rain. Ever since the reorganization of the works, since Bakhirev's dream and hers had become a reality, their love had blazed up with new strength.

Bakhirev often telephoned her in the mornings.

"Tina Borisovna, at twelve we're going to decide on the site for the new foundry shop. Will you be there?"

"Tina Borisovna, I want you to come with me to take a look at the chill casting sector."

They went about the works together as they had in the early days of their love, without fear or concealment. The only difference was that in those days there had been nothing to fear or conceal, whereas now Bakhirev's victory and the joy that filled him made him forget all caution, concealment or danger.

Tina was happy in his happiness yet it was only in rare moments that she was her old self again. In recent months she had ceased to be the former Tina.

Conscious of having wronged Volodya, she tried to assuage her sense of guilt by preparing attractive meals for him, and keeping the house particularly bright and clean. Only constant care for him eased her conscience. Her evening trips to the hut, too, exhausted her spiritual and physical forces. As soon as Volodya's a bit better, I'll tell him, she comforted herself. Lies and her loathing

of them, the need to conceal from the whole world her first and only love, the double life she led was too much for her. Daily events in the works, books, music, pictures—all those things which had evoked her quick, ardent response had lost interest and meaning. She worked carefully and efficiently, as always, but there was none of that vital interest with which she had formerly welcomed everything new, every success. Dmitri was her whole life, and torn from him she wilted, as though torn from the source of life itself. Only his happiness, his passionate absorption in the new plans, infecting her, sometimes resurrected the former Tina.

That day the works had received a permit to set up a department for chill casting and for high precision castings. Dmitri asked Tina to come to the conference; she watched him from a distance. He looked younger and glowed with that look of delight which had surprised her the previous autumn. But then he had seemed like some shy child, awkward in his unexpected happiness, whereas now he had the impatient elation of a young sprinter hurling himself at the finishing line, confident of victory.

At last she came to the low hut with its dull windows, the sagging porch and the smell of dry-rot in the dark entry. Tina opened the door and saw the dirty ceiling, the beetles crawling under the carpet. The room was repulsive, but he sat there by the table, a startling contrast to this musty room—immaculately dressed, freshly shaved, a twinkle in his eyes. She saw his massive head with the stubborn tufts of hair, his smile, slow and gay, and happiness seized her like a gust of wind, like a sudden shiver.

Dmitri's smile, the look in his eyes were always present in her heart, and still she was taken unawares, as it were, every time she met him—he was still dearer than she had remembered.

The smell of rot, the dirty ceiling no longer existed.

He gazed at her with that pleading, submissive, touching look so strange on his resolute face, and that gaze held the happiness for which she would have paid double the price.

Time flew by with amazing speed, as it always did in the hut.

Tina lay with her shoulders on his knees; her eyes were closed, she pretended to be dozing, to push away the reality of parting. She knew that they must go; beside her would be Volodya with his trustful, feverish eyes, and beside him the woman with the large, kind hands. And again there would be falsehood in every word, every look, in every second. She did not want to think about it, but tears forced their way into her eyes. Dmitri looked at her thin face, the lovely, sad face of a woman who had endured much, and remembered the clear-eyed, light-hearted girl in school sandals she had been when he saw her first. His throat tightened and a verse read in a book she once left in this room ran through his head.

*Do not sorrow, do not weep, though we're apart,  
Let not grief and pain your weary spirit rend,  
You are living, you are in me, in my heart  
You're life's mainspring, firm support and dearest friend.*



Since he had come to love her, he had a new sense for certain kinds of poetry. He wanted to speak words of a beauty never heard.

"You are living, you are in me, in my heart," he whispered.

She smiled at him through her tears.

"See how you're coming on! Remember, I told you that you'd be reciting poetry to me within a hundred years?"

There was a vague noise, then the sound of footsteps in the entry; the door was shaken furiously, the flimsy bolt tore away and it opened. It was unbelievable. But what followed was still more unbelievable. A woman in a blue cape stood as though petrified in the opening.

With a jerk Dmitri pulled Tina to him as though to cover her, protect her against a blow.

Then the woman threw back her head and they recognized Katya. She screamed, a high, thin scream, turned and disappeared.

It all happened in the space of a second. He might have thought he had dreamed it but for that high, thin scream still coming from the yard. Then followed a deafening metallic crash. The whole hut seemed to reverberate with grating and clanging.

Voices were heard outside; a man loomed up in the doorway.

"What's happening? A robbery, a fight?"

Then at last Dmitri recovered himself. The next moment he was running down the dark street through the pouring rain, with no overcoat, pulling on his jacket.

He saw something light in front, but when he came up to it, it was only a poster pasted to the fence.

The rain-filled street was empty.

Where was she? Where had she gone? If only she had not made for the river! . . . The bridge. . . . Panting, splashing through puddles, slipping and stumbling, he ran through the crooked streets of the old river district towards the chain of lights that marked the bridge. There the wind drove the rain in slanting lines and the headlights of belated cars were reflected in the wet asphalt.

"Has a woman in a blue cape passed you—running?" Bakhirev asked a traffic inspector.

"Yes. Why do you want to know?" But Bakhirev's face and voice, the condition of his suit told such a plain tale of trouble that the man added, "Look, over there, there's something . . ." and ran after Bakhirev.

In the middle of the long bridge something vague, pale, moved beside the railing.

"Katya, Katya, Katya!" Dmitri shouted. "Katya, stop, Katya—wait!"

He was afraid that, frantic with grief, she might throw herself over.

"Wait, Katya! Katya!"

The pale shape still struggled by the rail, sometimes leaning over it, sometimes apparently trying to stand up.

As he came closer, a wave of joy rushed through him. She was there. The irreparable disaster had not happened. He could still put things right.

A few more steps and he clutched the blue waterproof cape flapping in the wind. The cape, and nothing more.

"Katya!" he shouted. There was no answer. Only the stiff, wet cape caught on the wrought-iron railings flapped in the wind, tearing away from him.

The thin scream and the clatter of falling metal had died away. . . . Dmitri had rushed out, tousle-headed, in his shirt, snatching up his jacket as he went. Strangers peeped in and vanished at once. And still Tina sat there, stunned.

She had the feeling that Dmitri must return at once, that somebody would surely come in, explain everything, ease her. But nobody came.

Cautiously, fearing every sound, she dressed and slipped out into the entry. A crowd had gathered in the yard.

"I've seen him often round this way," an excited woman's voice said. "I asked the old man, why's a big shot from the tractor works coming to you? It's a friend of my son that was killed, he said. Well, I did smell a rat, but still, I thought, it might be true, maybe he really did come to see the old man. And if that was so, he was doing a kindness. Well, here we've got it, that kindness of his!"

"She must have been following him," said another voice. "I looked out and saw her, and when I looked again she was still there. Kept walking up and down. . . . We began watching her. And then all of a sudden there was that screaming and all that clatter. . . . Now here's trouble, I thought. Like as if she'd thrown a bomb in at them."

"What bomb? It was bowls and saucepans."

"Of course it wasn't a bomb. But what did she throw saucepans at them for?"

"And the director, too . . . big folks."

"And where's the other one? His fancy piece?"

"Sitting in there. Frightened to death."

Tina came out. The talk stopped. She passed through the crowd. The darkness sheltered her, but she could feel the searching eyes on her. She walked down the street, then followed the embankment to the tram stop.

Lights moved on the dark water by the bridge and the long finger of a searchlight wavered here and there. An excited crowd had gathered at the tram stop.

"There was only her waterproof cape left," somebody said.

"What's happened?" asked a newcomer.

"The director's wife's just thrown herself over the bridge."

"Which director, the new one or the old?"

"The new one. He's in one of those boats out there. . . ."

Tina did not scream or clutch at her heart. It has happened, she thought, numb with horror. His wife, the mother of his children is down there, at the bottom of the river. . . . The very thought of me will be hateful to him.

A tram came. All the other people got in and she remained standing alone . . . . It has really happened, this is *real*. . . . No, it can't be! Why did I never understand that it would come to this? We were making straight for it all the time.

Sooner or later something had to happen. . . . No. I've imagined it all. This is an ordinary evening with ordinary rain and ordinary trams crossing the bridge. In this simple, wet, dear world there's no room for such terrible things. . . . In this world there's room for anything.

She went to a telephone booth, and dialled Nina's number.

"Nina, the director's wife has just thrown herself off the bridge," she said in a wooden voice. "Yes. Thrown herself off the bridge into the river. There are people on the bridge. I mustn't be seen there. Be quiet. . . . Don't ask me anything, don't say anything, get dressed and go to the bridge. . . . Find out everything and telephone me at once."

Tina got into the next tram and went home. With the last of her strength she dragged herself up to the house. The door, the letterbox—everything seemed to have a special significance, to be symbols of the sweet, peaceful life she had lost.

Volodya met her at the door. He was wearing a flannel shirt and a fluffy grey shawl round his neck. He had been dozing and a sleepy warmth emanated from his smile, his slightly puffy eyes and his rosy face. He held out his hands to her.

"Who's this come home? My little swallow's come home!. . . I waited and waited and I was so lonely I just went to sleep so the time would go faster. Woke up and here you are. Why were you so long? Look, I've got supper all ready."

If only he would not look at her so trustfully. If only there were not that light on his face. Should she tell him? No, not now. . . . Let him sleep in peace one more night. . . . For one more night let him be untroubled.

"I'm so dreadfully tired, dear. . . . I couldn't eat a thing."

He fussed about her, prepared her bed, plumped up the pillows, and all the time he seemed so happy, and all the time he sought any excuse to touch her with his hot fingers.

She got into bed, and lay stretched out on her back, numb and motionless.

He spoke through the darkness from his bed.

"Tina. . . . I'm coming over to you. I'll lie right on the very edge. I can't bear to have you so far away from me."

He had to be near her. Was it some vague presentiment, or did the ferment of her spirit call up an echo in his devoted heart?

He pressed his face to her shoulder and she stroked his soft curls. Sleep, dear, sleep, she thought, perhaps this will be the last time you can sleep so peacefully. . . . Oh God, if I could only undo what I've done, if only this last year could be wiped out!

The clock struck musically in the dining room, the rain whispered outside the window, the lace curtains hung pale before it. Each object seemed to speak of happiness. How much she had had, only a very little while ago. A home warm with smiles and laughter, tender words and jokes, a husband wholeheartedly devoted to her, the works where everyone liked her, an interesting job she was doing well—and nothing to hide, nothing to be ashamed of, a life as calm, crystal-clear and full as a river flowing over the steppe. How much happiness she



had had! Millions of women could only dream of such a life. How could she have felt suddenly that she had nothing, that she was a pauper, that she was unhappy for the sole reason that she had never felt the touch of one whom she loved?

What a complete change there can be in a person's concept of happiness!

She had thought: It will harm nobody, and I shall know the fulness of happiness for at least an hour. . . . Know? What had she come to know? She knew what boundless happiness had been hers before that time, knew it in the moment when she had lost all possibility of it. She had thought it would harm nobody, but it had harmed all. Him, his children, herself. . . . And the woman who had been his wife. . . . No, that wasn't so, it couldn't be so!

Dmitri would now curse every moment he had spent with her.

When, where did ruin begin? As far back as the moment when I spurned all I had, all that would have made thousands of women happy? What am I being punished for? For despising a loving human heart? Yes, that deserves any punishment.

And now the irreparable has come to pass. His wife is dead. . . . No, that couldn't happen. They will save her. They have saved her already. But all the same Dmitri will curse me. And Volodya will never stand the shock. How can I go on living? If only I could die now, this very night! Yes, that's the only way. . . . The easiest of any left to me. . . . Volodya will go on living in our house. The apples will ripen on the tree looking in at our window. New shops will be built at the factory. . . . But I shall not be there, I shall not be able to see anything of what I love.

"Why aren't you asleep?"

"I am, Volodya. You go to sleep too, my beloved."

It was the first time she had ever called him her beloved from the fulness of her heart. For the first time she realized that he, her simple, sincere Volodya, deserved the greatest, the truest love. And how she now loved every strand of his hair, every breath from his warm lips! In this night when she took leave of life, she realized the greatness of its treasures for the first time. The movement of his hand, the swaying of branches outside the window, the ticking of the clock were dear to her, and spoke of life.

Will Volodya ever forgive me? Death pays all debts. . . . But perhaps that will only make it harder for him?

Her arm tightened instinctively round his shoulders. But he was not asleep, his acute ear had caught the deep feeling in her words and he was lying thinking of her.

"What was that you said just now?"

"I said, go to sleep, my beloved."

"Do you love me? Do you really love me? Sometimes I feel—and then I am so unhappy."

"Don't feel anything. Go to sleep, dear—my beloved."

He fell into a deep, untroubled sleep.

That day Katya felt on top of the world. Yesterday her husband had brought her a bottle of White Lilac perfume.

"I saw it—in a small shop—by the committee building," he told her, sounding strangely shy and awkward.

He had paid her a number of little attentions in the past few days, and that soothed her uneasiness. He's an excellent family man, quite devoted, she thought. He spoils me. What could have got into me that morning?

With pure enjoyment she prepared for the move into Valgan's apartment, buying new lamp-shades, curtains and table-cloths. A neighbour told her of excellent sets of enamelled saucepans in a shop in the neighbouring housing estate; it was raining, it was late, but she did want her fine new kitchen to have everything to match it, so she put on her waterproof cape and made her way to the shop. She got there just before it closed, bought pans and bowls of various sizes and even a beautiful white enamel bucket with a blue border. Her parcels were large and clumsy and the cape bulged over them, making her look like a broody hen. There was no taxi in the rank so she waited for one to come along, feeling the rain trickling through every opening but cheering herself with the thought of how nice her new things would look in the new kitchen.

The wind-driven rain and mist made the evening very dark. The first street lamps lighted up, and still no taxi. Katya peered impatiently along the road. A black car came round the corner, a car with a familiar number. It stopped half a block away, by the lighted entrance of a large building. Katya saw her husband's square figure emerge and disappear into the entry. She ran, but the car started up again at once and turned a corner.

Katya stopped, undecided. What should she do now? Go inside and join her husband? Would the car come back for him? But how could she go into some strange office loaded down with pots and pans, and how would she be able to find him? Perhaps she had better go back to the taxi rank?

While she stood hesitating, Dmitri came out and hurried down the street. Where could he be going? There were no office buildings further on, only back streets. Why had he sent the car away, why was he walking through the rain and mud of an ill-tended street in a run-down old district? Katya remembered the words she had ignored as a slip of the tongue. "The housing estate again? At seven o'clock."

Dmitri walked to the corner and turned into a lane. She hurried to the corner, and saw an unpaved road and cottages with tiny gardens that ended in a gully. He walked quickly, confidently, as a man does when he is following a familiar path. She no longer saw or heard anything but that dark silhouette in the distance and the loud beating of her own heart.

He stopped by a tall poplar and disappeared into a gate. Katya's legs felt weak, she saw a bench and sat down. The rain ran off the hood of her cape, but her lips felt dry. Fright, suspicion and fear of her own suspicion, a premonition of the truth, desire for the truth and horror of that truth robbed her of all strength and will power. She sat there for a long time, licking the raindrops that ran down on to her lips, then rose and dragged herself to the poplar. Beside it there

were two wicket gates, side by side. Which one had Dmitri gone through? From the distance she had not seen. Should she ask? But where should she go, whom should she ask? "Is my husband here?" And after that? She could not make up her mind, she walked on to the next corner and turned back again.

In a street like this people all know one another, and more than one had noticed the strange woman in her blue waterproof cape with the big, clumsy packages walking up and down the narrow lane. A man put his head out of the window.

"Have you lost something, missus?"

"No thanks—nothing."

She must either make up her mind, or go. But she was afraid to enter; she turned and hurried back towards the taxi rank. She walked two blocks and suddenly realized, with devastating clarity, that at this very moment he, her husband Dmitri, was with a woman. Why else would he go alone, in the rain, to this lost hole—after sending the car away, and going into that office building to fool the chauffeur? There could be no doubt about it. Katya ran back to the poplar, slipping on the muddy surface. The poplar, a high fence, two cottages, two wicket gates. The rooms were lighted, and Katya peered in through a crack in the curtains. One of the cottages was full of children, in the other she could see a bed and an old man's grey head on the pillow. Then Dmitri must be in a back room. But in which house? Not in the one with the children. . . . Katya opened the small gate and entered the yard. A lantern shone behind one of the fences.

"The rain's coming in on Chuha again," said a woman's voice, and a man's voice answered, "It won't hurt her." Then a child's treble chimed in, "But what about the baby pigs, Dad? Let's cover them with a bit of plywood."

Through a break in the fence she could see people busy around a low pigsty. A contented grunting came from it. Everything on the other side of that broken fence seemed so peaceful, so desirably peaceful and contented. But here? A dark rickety porch and a back window with thick dark-red curtains closely drawn. This was it. Katya leaned weakly against the door-post. Good, thick curtains at the window of this tumbledown hut—the contradiction was ominous. It was here. What was here? She must find out, see, know. Suddenly aware of the rattle of her pans inside the bucket, she carefully laid the packages down by the porch and holding her breath, climbed the shaky steps. The outer door opened easily. Across the entry was another door. A rosy light shone under it. She could hear Dmitri's voice—a strange, excited voice—and a woman's laugh. With the strength of desperation Katya tugged at the door. The frail bolt tore away.

Straight in front of her, in the small, dirty room with its carpets, she saw a woman lying with her head and shoulders on a man's knees. Dmitri was so different from his usual self, so unbelievably different that in the first instant she thought, That's not him! She had never seen him like this, had never thought him capable of it.

Even at home, he was always neat and smart. But now he sat in a crumpled shirt, open at the neck. His hair, always combed so smoothly back from his forehead, fell in dark strands. But the main thing which made it hard to



recognize her husband was his expression, one she had never seen, one she could never have imagined on his face. He was looking at the woman lying across his knees with hungry worship. When he saw his wife he did not push this woman away, he drew her to him with a rapid movement and bent over her, as though to protect her. And his angry, menacing look said, "Who dares to trouble her?"

The fusty little room with its carpets and drapes, her husband's appearance, and the woman—it was all so unexpected, so unreal, that for a moment Katya was stunned; but the movement with which he drew that woman to him, and the angry, menacing expression directed against whoever dared to trouble her told Katya more clearly than any words that he loved, ardently loved her, loved her as he had never for a single moment loved his wife. In that instant her woman's instinct told her all.

With a scream she rushed outside into the yard, stumbling over the packages she had left standing there. Pots and pans rolled about with a clatter. She screamed and ran down the street, fled from her realization, from herself.

Then she stopped screaming but continued to run. Without conscious thought she had understood many things in that instant—the quietness of his first kiss and the indulgent, even warmth of his caresses.

She had been happy in that measured warmth because she had known nothing else and thought that, absorbed as he was in his work, he could not love otherwise. She had been happy in his even-tempered calmness. "He's heart and soul in his work," she had told herself. "He's no time for love-making. He's not a woman-chaser. Excellent. That kind don't go running after others." She had thought he gave her all the love he was capable of, and had been happy in it. But it seemed he was capable of something very different. Again she saw that eager, submissive look he had bent on the woman in the dirty room. Never once had he looked like that at his wife, the mother of his three children. And every time she remembered that look she ran faster, ran till her heart felt like bursting and her legs buckled under her. Then she would cling, panting, to a fence or tree. And again she saw the protective movement with which he had drawn that woman to him. The movement of a mother drawing her child from danger, the movement of a man with his woman, the only woman for him. She understood, and again began to run. She remembered his frequent gifts in recent months; like a simpleton she had taken them for an expression of devotion growing with the years, whereas they had merely been sop to conscience. Katya ran on to the bridge. The dark, saving depths were beneath. She bent over the railing. Cold, darkness, annihilation lay beneath. Fright seized her. She staggered back. No! The wind tore at her cape, it hindered her, and she flung it off. . . . She never knew how she came to be at the railway station or why she had gone to such a place.

Wet through, with flying hair, she was the focus of curious stares. She must hide somewhere. There were taxis in the rank. She quickly got into one of them.

"Where to?" asked the driver.

Not with her voice alone, with everything in her she answered, "Home!"

Where else could she go? There was no other place in the world where she could have a roof over her head, where she could weep, beat her head against the wall and still feel warmth around her. Not the fire which he gave to that woman, but something, a tiny glow of warmth to thaw her frozen body and spirit, numbed with deadly cold.

"Home. . . ." Katya gave the address and was at home within half an hour. The frightened children ran to meet her.

She suffered for them even more than for herself. She put her arms round all of them at once, pressed them to her soaking dress, to her tear-wet face, crying incoherently, "Leave all three? . . . For what? For whom?! . . . I won't give you up, I won't, I won't. . . ."

Anya, terrified, ran for the neighbours.

Katya did not even see the people round her, the doctor, the nurse. When she came to herself Dmitri was beside her, rubbing her hands and feet, giving her wine and hot tea. She burst into tears again, and sobbed all the louder as she saw how her weeping made him pity her.

"Katya, you mustn't. . . Katya, remember the children. . . . We must think of them. . . ."

A note of sternness crept into his voice. Her weeping changed to screaming.

The children were taken away somewhere and he put his arm round her and stroked her hair. She knew this was only pity, but for lack of the love she had missed, she clutched greedily even at this mild warmth.

Nina telephoned to Tina during the night. Volodya was sleeping so soundly he never heard the bell.

"She's alive. She's at home," said Nina in a voice of ice. A terrible weight seemed to slip from Tina's shoulders. Death retreated, life throbbed again. "But the whole works knows, the whole town knows. . . . You can't come back to the works. . . . I'll see to all the formalities. Have you told Volodya?"

"Not yet. I'm afraid. . . ."

"It's rather late for you to start worrying about him now." Tina did not even hear the hatred in Nina's voice.

She was alive! Volodya would have Nina, she loved him, she had loved him for years, she would not leave him alone. . . .

"Come here in the morning. You tell him. . . . So he shouldn't hear it from me. It'll be easier for him."

"Very well."

Tina sat down by the telephone in the hall. *She* was alive. The very worst had not happened. How happy she was that it was so. . . . And what a relative thing happiness is.

It was getting light. Volodya was still asleep. Tina could not sleep, she could not sit still. In the dim light she began to clean up the kitchen, washing the shelves and polishing the window with a fervour unusual even for her.

Early in the morning Nina came, and saw Tina busy cleaning up.

"Are you mad?"

There was loathing in her voice, but Tina was prepared to accept anything from her, for the sake of the love that glowed in her grey eyes when she spoke Volodya's name.

Tina went outside and stood counting the raindrops that fell from the roof.

"Twenty-one drops. . . . Twenty-two. . . . Twenty-three. . . . How slowly the seconds go. . . . Time without end."

At last Nina appeared.

"Hanging's too good for you," she said, not looking at Tina. "A man like that. . . ." Tears trickled down the brick-red patches on her cheeks.

Tina saw and realized that for Nina Volodya was the best, the only one, just as Dmitri was for her. How glad she was that Nina would be with Volodya.

"He doesn't believe me," said Nina. "He wants to hear it from your own lips."

Tina crossed the threshold of what had been her home.

"Tell me it isn't true, Tina. Say just one word and I won't believe anyone, anything, neither people nor my eyes or ears. I'll only believe you."

She could barely force out the words. "It's true, Volodya."

He went into the room and Nina followed him. Tina sat down on a chair in the hall. She sat there until Nina came out and said, "Volodya's coming over to my place. He can't bear to look at you. You have to go away."

"Yes, I'll leave with the night train."

She did not know where she would go.

Volodya and Nina left the house. Through the window she saw Volodya's back, his grey hat and grey coat they had bought together, glad to find just the right colour, glad that it all suited him so well.

Now she was alone. She could neither weep nor think, and began clumsily packing a small suitcase. She took only the most necessary things, those she had bought herself. Her thoughts fumbled like her hands. Where shall I go? I don't know. What does it matter? I'll just get into the train and let it take me away. Three hundred roubles left from my last wages. What next? . . . What does it matter what next?

She finished packing and began to tidy the rooms. She wanted to leave everything in perfect order. That much she could do for Volodya.

Never had she handled his things with such tenderness. The shirts with worn collars, the socks with darned toes. Every shirt, every sock seemed to speak of love and joy. He had torn that cuff when he carried Tina through the garden so that she should not wet her feet. That spot on his shirt—he had made that when he gave her cherry jam in a spoon one evening when she came home from work too tired to eat, and went straight to bed. My dear one. Why did I think I could not love you properly, with my whole heart? I could have done. . . . She stroked his socks and shirts and folded them tenderly. Should she stay? Ask his forgiveness? He would forgive her. . . . But all the same she could not pretend, now, that the other was not dearer to her. What would life be for Volodya? About Dmitri she did not dare to think. It was too terrible to know he must curse every hour he had spent with her.



Two letters from Moscow were in the table drawer. About the pictures and the chill casting. Almost instinctively she put them with her things. She spent the whole day cleaning up. In the evening the telephone rang.

"Tina!" A quiet, hoarse voice. The sound of it made her skin rise in goose-flesh on her arms.

"Dmitri!"

"How are you feeling, Tina?"

"I'm going away."

"When?"

"With the night train."

"I'm coming to you. Go down to the river. The place where we met."

The familiar path. The night was windy and rainy, like the previous one. He put his arms round her and she clung to him.

"How is she, Dmitri?"

"A chill, shock, weeping. But no danger. Where are you going?"

"I don't know yet. What does it matter?"

"What will you do?"

"I don't know. Or care."

"Have you got money?"

"Yes, plenty."

"You must have more. I'll send it to you. Don't dare to refuse. It's bad enough as it is. Don't refuse."

It was too dark for her to see his face, and with an accustomed movement she ran her fingers over his forehead and cheeks.

"Don't you curse me, Dmitri?"

"What for?"

"Because of your wife . . . your family . . . yourself."

"She still has the children, her home, and she still has me, her husband. I have my home, my children and the factory. Your husband has his home, the factory he grew up in and friends. But you've lost everything. You don't know where you're going, or why, you have nothing, not even a roof over your head, no relations, and you ask me—" He drew her closer to him. "Tina. . . I'm ready—now—to do anything you want."

"I'm doing what I want."

Raindrops trickled down her neck and under her coat collar, but her face was warmed by his breath, hot and uneven.

"This is only for a time, Tina. . . We'll see each other again. . . We can still decide. . ."

"Hush! One more minute with you. I'm happy, because you're with me. . . Dmitri, if we could go back, to the beginning?"

"I wouldn't do a single thing differently."

"My darling. . . I'm so happy now."

His shoulders shook. Warm drops mingled with the cold rain fell on her fingers as they stroked his face.

"Little icicle," he whispered in pain and sorrow. "My little icicle!"

"Good-bye, Dmitri. . . . It's time. . . ."

"Wait. . . ."

She moved away from him. "We're both happy, at this moment, aren't we?"

"Yes," he answered firmly. "While I'm beside you, I'm happy."

"Then that's everything. . . . I want nothing more in life than those words. . . ."

She was calm, but his shoulders shook.

Tina returned home. She got into a hot bath and closed her eyes. Either from the warmth or the quiet sound of water trickling from the tap, things long past swam back into her mind—the merry babble of the mountain stream, the warmth of the sun and the baby stag looking into her eyes. Those eyes, calm even in a moment of deadly danger, saw everything, reflected everything but let nothing sink into their depths. Whence came that impenetrable quietness? From ignorance? Or was it because deep within everything was so perfect that nothing could harm it? The little stag could be killed, destroyed, but nothing could take away that clear, bright look.

Long, long ago Tina too had known days of that quiet calmness. Where had it gone, the little stag? She ran looking for it then but it was not in the bushes, or the reeds. Like a little patch of solid sunshine it leapt from the ground, soared and vanished. . . . If only she could vanish as quickly and easily.

Tina got out of the bath, dried herself and glanced mechanically into the mirror. The youthfulness of her reflection amazed her, it seemed unnatural. She felt a thousand years old, yet it was a dark, supple woman at the height of her beauty who looked out of the mirror with tender sadness.

The futility of that warm, living beauty filled her with bitterness. She wanted to fling herself, the remnants of her life, on the ground, trample and destroy them. . . . Everything in life is a deception. I want nothing. . . . Destroy myself, throw myself under any passing feet, under wheels, under a train. Didn't I want to die! Why should I go somewhere, think about something? Under the train! . . . I won't be the first. . . .

She thought of Anna Karenina. And suddenly she felt it had all happened already. The woman called Tina who had loved Dmitri and deceived her husband was dead, and it was all behind her—the implacable roar of wheels, the last dying clutch at life when the world is so inexplicably dear, and the dead body, indifferent to all, shamelessly displayed for all eyes to see. . . . It had all happened. Her life as a woman was over, ended, crushed under the wheels. What kind of life remained? What power could carry her not under the train, but into it, to a new journey, a far journey? She did not know what moved her, but her hands laid the Moscow letters in her handbag.

Am I a coward?—she asked herself and firmly answered: No. Death for some good reason—in battle, or for some scientific experiment, to save another life—yes! But such a senseless death! A senseless death to end a senseless life. . . . The life surrounding Tina might be complex, difficult, filled with joy and sorrow, but it could not be senseless. Every hour, every moment was replete with meaning and purpose. One might be blinded and confused by weakness and

bewilderment, and lose sight of that meaning and purpose. But they could never disappear. Open your eyes—and there they were.

There was still a long time left before her train was due to leave, so she decided to lie down and try to sleep. But her thoughts drove sleep away.

What do I live for? When Anna Karenina lost love, there was no more sense or meaning in life, so her death was not senseless. What was left to her? A woman with an awakened brain and heart—what did life offer them, what could she live for? But I? I have known a great deal of sorrow. The death of my parents, Ignat's death, my difficult love of Dmitri. But I have had happiness too. The happiness of being close to the best, the bravest. . . . Perhaps my grief is somehow linked with my happiness? After all, the best fighters are always under fire. . . . The world is still made so that the best often has to struggle through. . . . It's strange. Or perhaps it's not. How many thousands of years people lived under these stars, from slaves to workers, under the savage law of property! And now a new, long-sought world has been born. . . . Even in the old fairy-tales, you never find the hero who as soon as he is born has to start beating off hordes of enemies, mature and well armed. In battle there is not only victory, there is difficulty and pain. But not senselessness! However it may be, the hero is born for happiness. And perhaps the harder it is for him to advance and fight, the greater the sense, the greater the value in the life of each one who helps that struggle, that advance, even a little—that cannot be taken from me, or Dmitri, or Volodya—nobody. And Volodya will be happy. Happy in Nina's love. They will probably have children. . . .

Tina stretched out on the bed and told herself sternly: Go to sleep. No insomnia. . . . Volodya used to say you were like an Indian fakir, with a will strong enough to stop your heart beating. Go to sleep this minute! How quiet the house is. Once upon a time a woman lived there who had never in her life told lies, who was devoted to her husband, who was very happy but thought herself unhappy because she had never loved ardently. Then that woman disappeared and another took her place, a woman who lied every minute, with every step she took, a woman whose heart was scorched with love, who was desperately unhappy but thought herself the happiest in the world. Now that woman too is gone. What kind of a woman remains? First of all she fears nothing. There are only two fearful things in the world, to lose the one you love or to lose your country. The first has already happened, and the second cannot happen. The second can never happen. Then what have I to fear? What are you weeping for, Indian fakir? And how dare you not sleep when I have told you to sleep?

Tina slept.

## NIGHT AND MORNING

For the second day Katya flung herself about on her bed, wept and slept not at all. She kept seeing again her husband's face with that look of hungry worship turned on the woman whom he so hastily shielded with his own body, and the threatening anger with which he looked at her, his wife.



No, this was not her Dmitri. It was another man, unknown, terrible in his estrangement. For many years she had lived in cosy comfort, sheltered behind her husband's warm, safe back. Suddenly there was no husband, no warmth, no safe refuge. Only cold darkness and slippery ground beneath her feet like the darkness and mud of the previous rainy night, and she wailed, "Where are you? Where, where can I go? Dmitri, don't leave me! I'm dying!"

"How she loves you," said Roslavleva, as she helped him to tend Katya.

But it was not deep love he heard in her screams, only the terror of standing alone that crushes the weak. Tormented though he was by pity and a consciousness of guilt, still, at the bottom of his heart he could not help condemning this flabby nature incapable of resolution or resistance. Shielded by his care from all life's difficulties, motherhood had been her only duty, and even maternal feeling collapsed at the first trial. From that scream by the hut, from her stumbling run across the bridge up to this night, she had never once made an effort to control herself before the children. Everything was forgotten, and there was something almost animal in her obsession with the injury done her as a woman.

He pitied her, he realized that this was simply the way she was made, one could not demand more from her just as one cannot demand song from one who is dumb.

But this understanding did not make it any easier for him—harder, in fact. The future loomed even more drearily hopeless, and that limp, spineless body was even more repellent. As he suffered and pitied, as he soothed, tended and gave medicine to this woman to whom he was fettered, he could not but compare her with the one he had lost and for whom he longed so desperately. That one had found the strength to renounce happiness for ever for the sake of another woman's children, while this one could not control herself even for the sake of her own. The children's peace of mind, which he and Tina had protected at the cost of their own happiness, she had destroyed in half an hour. How would Tina have acted in such a situation, he wondered, and the answer came at once: she could never have been in such a situation. There are women whom one does not at once understand and value, but as time goes on they draw one more, physically, mentally and spiritually, until they become as necessary as the air one breathes. Tina, he knew, was one of these. Yes, but suppose she had found herself in Katya's position? Lids narrowed, he pictured her eyes, so light in her dark face, so tender and calm. Yes, she would have walked and walked in the darkness and rain until she had mastered herself, and would have come home with her own clear, firm gaze. And not a tear would she have shed in front of the children.

Again Katya burst out into loud weeping. What would happen to this flabby spirit? Would he be able to restore her balance?

He stroked her shoulder. Weeping, she pressed her cheek against his hand.

"Why? Why did you do it? I'd rather you'd killed me! Let me kill myself!"

"Katya! Katya!" He looked significantly at the door.

"Oh! Oh! why didn't I throw myself into the water! I want to die!"

A dreadful thought rose: Yes, even that she couldn't do. She couldn't do anything effectively. The thought horrified him, he hastily put his arm round his wife, but even as he did so he could not thrust back the thought—what could be more repulsive than an abortive suicide? Irresolution, hysterics, exhibitionism! There's nothing she can do, not even that. But how she's sobbing, tearing herself to pieces. Will she ever be able to get back to the calm which means life and happiness for her?

He was sorry for Katya, alarmed for her, lapped in care and comfort though she was. But he was not sorry or alarmed for Tina—alone, thrust out of her accustomed channel into the unknown. She was so alive herself that she would always attract life to her, it would surge around her with all its myriad play of light. No, he was not alarmed about Tina, but he longed for her and envied all who would see her clear eyes, see her smile and share her astringent refreshing irony.

"Don't leave me," Katya wailed. "I can't live without you. I won't live without you!"

Ryzhik came into the room in his singlet and shorts.

"Let him go if he wants, Mother. . . . If he wanted to leave us for that woman, he can."

Bakhirev looked at his wife's flaccid body, no longer with pity but with loathing. Losing his son, he lost everything. She had thought of nobody, spared nobody. She was incapable of considering anyone but herself. How could he go on living with a creature like that? They had not spared the boy. Some day he would understand, though, some day he would come back to his father again.

Katya's sobbing became louder, and again dislike gave way to pity. He quickly put himself between her and the boy.

"Katya, stop! Katya, pull yourself together." He went up to Ryzhik. His son was closer and dearer to him than any of the others, and he did not fear to say, looking straight into dull, suffering eyes no longer those of a boy, "I didn't want to leave you, Ryzhik. But I loved her very much. When you're a little older, you'll understand. But you mean more to me. And I shall never leave you. Now go away for a little while. I'll explain everything later on. But for the present I've got to look after Mother. Go along, now." Ryzhik went.

"Katya, you must understand," he said. "That's all finished now. There was never anything like it before and there never will be again. I'll be the same devoted husband I've been all these years. Do pull yourself together. All right, I'm to blame, but you must think of the children, they're not to blame for anything. Punish me any way you like, but don't torture them. They can't sleep, they're just as miserable as we are. Look what this has done to Ryzhik. Just look at him! Are you a mother or not?"

But she went on crying and flinging herself about. Roslavleva took the children home with her, and Bakhirev asked the nurse to give Katya a sedative.

For the first time in over twenty-four hours the place was quiet. Bakhirev went into his study, took off his jacket, sat down heavily in the arm-chair and closed his eyes, listening to his wife's breathing and the rustling of the poplars

outside the window. Every leaf strained from its stalk as though trying to take flight, thousands of tiny sails fluttered in the darkness outside. It was a windy night but the rain had stopped, and ragged clouds flew rapidly across the sky. Katya sobbed in her sleep. If he left her she would not be capable of living, she really might kill herself.

If only it were possible to leave her. But part with the children? Leave Ryzhik in the hands of that spineless woman incapable of standing up to anything? In the hands of helpless despondency? If only she would give him the children! Tina would bring them up much better. But they would not leave their mother. And he could not be cruel enough to take them from her. What if one were to put it to the wise judgement of the future communist society, a judgement of the highest justice? Perhaps the highest justice would be to unite those who could create the best family, and give the children to the woman who would be the best mother to them. But was it just to take them from a woman who had risked her own life to give them theirs? And could it be just to smash a life even for the sake of five others? Could their happiness be built up on her unhappiness? Were not the ethics of the future communist society in their simple, profound essence based on the principle that no one's happiness must be built up on the unhappiness of another? But then, could there possibly, in that communist world, be a person like Katya, restricted in mind and feeble in spirit? Or a person whose heart was wounded, like Tina? And could there be, in that communist society, a person like him, Bakhirev, possessed by a driving urge towards a splendour, just world yet swept by other passions?

The judgement of the future would be different, just as the judges and the characters of people would be different. It is our good fortune to have more and more propagators of communism, true to the first and best of them—Lenin. It is our good fortune that capitalist property, the main obstacle on the way to communism, has been swept away. But battles still continue along the road.

A train raced past the window. Bakhirev looked at his watch. Yes, it was just time. . . . That was Tina passing. . . . He ran to the window, but saw nothing except the dark trees, the roofs and the factory chimneys. The even beat of wheels over points and a whistle from the engine dominated the rustling of heavy, wet leaves. The beat of wheels, the puffing of the engine. . . . The train had passed long ago but the sound continued. . . . That is not the train . . . that is my heart. Tina has gone. Dearly beloved friend, wife, the only woman who could adorn, enrich, bring happiness to every hour, every second of my life. We shall meet again. But when? After many years? But what do years matter? Tina is one of those people whom one understands more deeply, values more highly, remembers more often with the years. What are we paying for in this agony of parting? For having loved? But love like ours could never be a crime demanding payment. For mistakes of the distant past? For betrayal of ourselves? Because once, in times long ago, we let ourselves drift into ways not our own? We both wanted to escape the difficulties of life, I into a quiet life with Katya, Tina into the peace of Volodya's home. But quietness, peaceful drifting isn't for us. It is not so much for betrayal of Katya and Volodya we



are paying, it is for that long-past betrayal of ourselves. . . . Inertia will always call for payment sooner or later if one gives way to it, if one does not overcome it.

He went into the nursery, into the kitchen, then stood still in the hall. He wandered restlessly about the apartment, avoiding only one room, the room in which his wife lay asleep. He returned to his study. A lonely engine whistle came from the distance. Good-bye, Tina. He closed his eyes. Part of himself must be extinguished, thrust out of his life. He sat there for a long time.

When he opened his eyes he saw the quiet light of the table lamp, the serene peace of the study.

I'll get Ryzhik back, he thought. I'll give him a home again. Then he will come back to me.

Like Valgan on that other evening, he went to the window. He looked at the myriad sparkle of lights, the illuminated arches and the stars. How much effort of heart and hand had gone into raising all this from the ruins in which it had lain! His suffering brought him closer to people. It was not lighted arches he saw before him, but human lives, the lives of those now working in the shops or sleeping peacefully at home. Yesterday he had passed Dasha and Seryozha, touched for a moment but not really concerned about them. But now their youth, not an easy youth, but clean and healthy, rose before him from the lights, the stars and the rustling of the leaves. They were not together. And why? Merely because there were no walls, roof, windows and doors for them? His own pain responded in a manifold echo to the pain of others. He felt the sadness of it much more than they themselves. He understood better the value of every minute of happiness lost.

They must be together. Why should human happiness be dependent on timber, bricks and metal? Building material must be found. If not timber and bricks, then slag-and-concrete blocks, or something else. . . . There was plenty of that, it could even be made at the works. Or the manufacture could be centralized in the region. Grinin would understand, he'd support the idea. Building organizations overloaded? Rubbish! Couldn't they do the building themselves, and glad to? If they didn't understand at once, he'd fire them with his own enthusiasm, his own experience. Suppose he had had to build a house for himself and Tina with his own hands? He would have gone without food and sleep, every brick he laid would have been pure joy. But why stop at building one single house? A whole street of houses! Help those who were in love, who were glad to work for those they loved, for a family, for happiness. The good weapons must be made by happy people with good hands. He could see it before him, a district of new houses, new streets, Joy Street, Youth Street, Love Street, and a street named after the fighters with good weapons. . . .

He passed his hand over his forehead. He had been letting his imagination run away with him. But the fantasy had eased his pain. And after all, it was not pure fantasy, it was a need, a demand, a reality. There was only one way out of his own grinding sorrow, to do for others what he longed so vainly to do for himself. Up to now he had been unable to determine what should be his first big

steps in starting everything anew. Suppose he made this one of his first actions as director? Help the works to get out of its long-standing housing shortage?

He remembered the hours spent in that marble hall and condemned his former self—a fanatic about technical progress merely for the sake of progress. Could a man like that stand at the head of a socialist factory? But how slowly even the most obvious truths penetrate into the human mind! In essence, everything which had passed in that hall had been part of the struggle for human happiness, and he had believed he understood it with his whole mind. But it had taken a wound in his heart before understanding could reach that, too. How difficult it was for people to change! Was it as difficult for all, or only for him?

Strange as he found it, his new ideas dulled his pain. Katya was sound asleep. He moved the chair to his table and sat down. Two instructions from the Ministry, long awaited orders, lay on the table. Instructions on handing over the Diesel production to the sister factory, and on building new shops. Two days ago these papers would have been like two great wings, today they were only lifebelts that could save him from his grief. He bent over instructions and other papers, he concentrated all his mind and will. He couldn't sleep. Should he go on pacing like a caged tiger? Or perhaps weep hysterically like Katya? No. He forced himself to read what was before him. At first it was difficult to compel his brain to take in words and figures, then something strange happened. If you turn all the lights off in one half of a town, they burn with double brightness in the other half. And so it was with him. Whether it was from his deep suffering, or the wish to forget it, or the urge to enter the path of battle quickly, or some other reason he himself could not understand, all his inner force became focussed on one thing, and every word, every figure came to life, shone, spoke to him. In response to an old application, the Ministry had issued funds for the construction of two big new shops. There was no room for them on the factory grounds. Should he pull down old shops? Yes, but if the factory handed over the diesel production, a large area would be freed. The central shops stood in three rows. What if they were linked with crossways at the end? And the funds issued by the Ministry could be used for reconstruction of the whole factory. Unite the three main blocks by a fourth, and install underground and overhead conveyors? Reduce internal loading, unloading and transport to a minimum?

In his mind's eye he saw the regular, mighty flow of component parts. The main outline of plans for the new factory, the details of production—all that at any other time would have taken many days of tedious work, became visible and distinct. He had never experienced anything like it before. Thoughts flashed through his mind, his hand could not keep up with them, dashing down the main outlines of drawings, the first syllables of words. . . . I'll sort it out afterwards, finish the drawings, the plan. So long as I don't lose anything now, so long as I get it all down somehow, everything that's in my mind. . . .

It was inspiration.

He awakened from his absorption as dawn was breaking. He put out the light, but the world was still drained of colour, only shadows of varying density

filled the room. The crimson draping over the wall still looked velvety-black, the blue cushion on the sofa was merely a pale patch.

He lay down and once more thought over his plan. He saw the top of the drapings turn wine-red, and the books on the shelves take on their green tint. Slowly colour returned from the darkness.

The door creaked quietly; he had left it ajar. He turned round. Ryzhik stood on the threshold. Frowning, untidy, haggard from a night in which he had probably not slept, he stood there without looking at his father or saying a word. The sad concentration on his childish face was strange, out of place. His left slipper was badly fastened. Bakhirev remembered the "walking misery" at the station. They had not spared Ryzhik. Whom was he seeking? His father or his mother? No, it was not her. He had come to the study. Why had he come? To say "go away" once more? He stood without a word. Bakhirev recognized his own stubbornness, his awkwardness, his heavy eyes. It was childhood, of which he himself had been robbed, that stood at the door. Was it to be taken away again? He wanted to hold out a hand to his son and was afraid. But Ryzhik hesitated a little and then, still without raising his eyes, went up to his father. And again Bakhirev saw himself, his heavy walk, his compressed lips. He wanted to ask in what spirit his son had come, but like the boy, he could not open his mouth. The golden head moved towards the window and flamed in the first rays of the sun. Bakhirev could not help it, he raised his hand and hesitatingly touched that hair, then withdrew it quickly. The boy did not move. He had forgiven nothing. He had come to accuse, to say again, "Go away." They stood in silence, close to one another. Turning a little, Bakhirev could see their reflection in the mirror.

The boy's head, tousled by his father's timid hand, had the same tufts as his. Caught in the early sunshine, they shone like flames. Shaggy, frowning, sombre, they stood side by side, stubbornly silent. At any other moment Bakhirev would have laughed at the likeness of the shaggy, gloomy figures, but now laughter was far from him. How alike they were! Even in this silence Bakhirev saw himself. His son! Again he raised a hesitant hand and cautiously put his arm round Ryzhik. The boy's body did not yield, but neither did it pull away.

"I've come to tell you, Father—" He broke off, and Bakhirev waited with sinking heart. What had the boy come to say, what had been his thoughts all this night?

For a long time Ryzhik was silent, unable to say more. Then he moved away from his father, his frown deepened, and he began again—quietly, angrily yet all in a gulp, "I've come to tell you, Father, that I love you all the same."

With a strong movement Bakhirev drew his son to him, and laid his face on the boy's glowing head. Ryzhik did not respond at once, then he pressed his forehead against his father's cheek.

"You're prickly today," he said. He snuggled closer and added, "I love you even more. . . ."

Why did people always think children couldn't understand, Bakhirev asked himself. They understood more clearly than grown-ups, and more deeply. This



small man had understood it all. Understood what Tina meant, and what the sacrifice had cost his father.

With a nod Ryzhik indicated the bedroom door. "I'll get the doctor for her in an hour."

"Very well."

He not only understood, he wanted to help. Bakhirev held him a little away, so as to look at him better. The red hair was like flames. That was how Tina had painted him, a head of living gold. She had seen everything. She knew Bakhirev better than he knew himself. Better than him she had understood that never for a moment could he be happy and at peace without Ryzhik.

He drew the boy to him again. "We'll do everything together."

What a relief it was that they were together. The happiness of knowing that he had not lost his son, had not destroyed the boy's faith in his father, which would mean destroying his faith in the world!

They stood together in silence, two men, two friends who understood one another without need of explanations, father and son.

He went to the works as soon as it was really light. The wind had driven off the clouds and died away, leaving only the leaves on the dark trees quivering faintly as though remembering the tempest of the night. Leaves, grass and flowers were heavy with moisture and round drops lay in the petals, gleaming palely.

Bakhirev walked through the empty streets, blind to all about him. His will was concentrated on one thing—to master himself, not to allow himself thoughts of useless bitterness.

He climbed the stairs to his office unhurriedly. Through the window he heard a businesslike rattling. Tractors came crawling out of the assembly shop on to the trial run lot, still damp and shadowy. Why was it that today their awkward, businesslike appearance touched him so deeply? They seemed to look at him in friendly reproach. Look how clumsy you've made us, yet we do try our best! To him they were not merely concentrations of metal parts, not merely machines, they were the good weapons which would win happiness for millions, win communism. Good weapons, weapons of happiness, must be made by good, happy hands. The lives of the workers, fair payment for their work, direct and maximum interest in constant progress—it was on these things that he must concentrate mind and will.

The secretary came in, her eyes wide and inquisitive. "You sent for some people about rooms. Shall they come in, or will you see them another time?"

Looks at me as though I were a leper, he thought with a wry inner smile. "Why another time?" he said. "Send them in now."

Dasha and Seryozha had spent the Sunday at the works rest and recreation centre out of town, staying over night, and on Monday they went straight from the station to work. The new director had told them to come before their shift. Dasha was full of hope.

"He'll do it. Whatever happens, he'll at least find us a room. You'll see."

In the waiting-room they heard all about Saturday's events, which were the talk of the whole works.

"That's put paid to our hopes of rooms," said Sinenky, who had come in after them.

"Maybe not," said Seryozha doubtfully.

"His own home's going up in smoke, he won't have much time to be thinking of ours."

Dasha said nothing. She was shocked. She remembered Tina's sad words, "You won't condemn me, Dasha?" That was what Tina must have meant. She saw again Bakhirev's massive face whose gloominess she had so surely realized concealed kindness and fairness. A young heart longs to believe in great, good, just people. For Dasha, who had grown up without a father, Bakhirev had been the object of this faith, and she could not reconcile the thought of him with all the dreadful, vile things she heard. She tried to imagine her beloved Tina beside him and felt so angry and ashamed for them that understanding came—understanding of what they must have meant to one another; and with it came pity.

"We won't go now, Seryozha," she whispered. "Another time. We oughtn't worry him. He's got his own troubles."

At that moment the secretary came out and said, "Dmitri Alexeyevich asks you to go in."

Dasha entered the office; she did not dare look at Bakhirev's face, her shame and pity for him were so great.

"Sit down, sit down. Let's talk it over."

She was surprised to hear that his voice sounded just as usual, only a little softer and deeper.

"First of all, about you, Seryozha. I've been thinking about you."

Without haste he asked Seryozha about all his wishes and plans, his earnings, his studies. Seryozha talked and Dasha listened to him, still afraid to raise her eyes, still surprised that the talk flowed so easily. . . . Just as if nothing had happened, she thought. Asks about everything as though he had nothing more important to think about than Seryozha.

"If only I'd got an education, there's all sorts of things I could work out," said Seryozha. "If I knew physics better, couldn't I use a photo-cell for switching over a lathe? I can't get that photo-cell out of my mind. We could work miracles! . . . But I can't do even simple things. If I start to reckon up heights I get all tied up. Everybody says a worker, a milling machine operator doesn't need higher mathematics. But what I say is, a milling machine operator needs it just as much as an engineer does."

"I've been thinking about you. What's to be done with you? What'll be better for you? Maybe we should put you in the experimental laboratory? Or perhaps make you foreman or manager in your own shop?"

"Eh, Dmitri Alexeyevich." Dasha caught the offended note in Seryozha's voice. "Even you still don't understand things properly." He shifted his chair in anger and reproach. "Would a violinist drop his violin to go and be a manager of a concert hall?"

Bakhirev said nothing.

Seryozha waited a moment, and continued.

"And you wouldn't ask a good violinist to do it, either. Only one that wasn't much good. And my lathe's my violin. I know the voice of every cutter. And then you tell me, 'Leave your machine!' If it was anyone else I wouldn't wonder so much, but for you to say such a thing!"

"I'm sorry. Forgive me. What can I do for you, then? I understand you. Only there's one thing you've got to get clear. The trouble isn't only with Gurov. There are a lot of difficulties. We're going ahead so fast we're falling over ourselves."

"I understand all that, but still. . . ."

"And there's another thing you've got to understand. We're going ahead to communism, but we don't find things waiting for us along the road. We've got to do every single thing ourselves. Well, and we shall! But not right away at once. Together we have to find ways to give everybody an interest—a financial interest—in inventions and improvements, from chief engineer to machine hand."

They went on talking and Dasha gave a timid side glance at Bakhirev. His eyes were not lowered. They had never been so widely open, so clear yet sad, so large on his drawn, pale face. And never had there been such fatherly warmth in them. Whether it was because she had never had a father, whether it was pity for this suffering, paternally kind man who had fallen so painfully, a sob burst suddenly from her—not actually a sob so much as a deep, shuddering sigh. He heard it.

"Now don't you fret, Dasha. Everything's going to be all right, and we'll manage a home for you. Here's how things are. We'll find the money. We'll find the building materials too. But we've not got the building workers. Do you want to join up with others like you and build yourselves a house by the autumn, according to your own plan, your own tastes?"

Dasha did not fully understand at once. She knew what difficulties the factory was having with housing, she was almost resigned to the idea of screening off a corner of the kitchen for herself and Seryozha. A room in a hostel had been the height of her hopes. And now suddenly there was talk of a whole apartment which could be planned and arranged just the way she wanted, an apartment with gas, good plumbing and a bathroom. She was afraid to breathe lest the vision should vanish. When mother comes, thought Dasha, she'll never believe it.

"Sinenky and Tosya are outside, they've come about the same thing," she said hesitantly. "And there are some from the engine shop, too." She had a feeling that the more people backed up the plan, the likelier it was of realization.

"Call them all in."

Chubasov hurried into Bakhirev's office expecting to find him crushed, confused, alone. But he found Bakhirev the centre of a close circle of young people, all examining and discussing plans.



"This wall could be placed so, or so, or so, whichever way people wanted it," said Bakhirev, moving a match on his table. He was as excited and eager as the young people around him. His face was paler and thinner than before, and the dark eyes seemed bigger.

Chubasov, surprised, sat down quietly at one side.

The discussion ended and all left, except for Dasha, who hesitated by the door. Bakhirev seated himself in the silence and his head fell sadly. Dasha wanted to reproach him, to encourage him, to say how much she and Seryozha hated to hear anything bad about him, and how sure they were that in spite of it all he would make everything all right, and put the whole works on to a new path, a better one. So she stood by the door, unable to find any way of expressing all this in a few words. Bakhirev raised his head and looked at her enquiringly. What am I shuffling about here for, thought Dasha, and burst out, "Dmitri Alexeyevich, it's you we all rely on!"

"We'll get it built, we'll have it done by the autumn, Dasha."

She flushed crimson. He thought she'd waited to pester him again about an apartment. A wave of anger swept her—at herself for not being able to say what she wanted, and at him for not understanding.

"That wasn't what I meant. . . . That wasn't what I meant at all!"

She shot out like an arrow. It was only when she had gone that Bakhirev realized what she had wanted to say. How strangely his fate was linked with that of this girl. She had been the first to give him her trust in the roar of the iron foundry. Strange? No, there was nothing strange about it. There are many lives which sooner or later meet and mingle because they are flowing in the same current. That was the case with him, and Dasha, and Seryozha, and this poor Chubasov who sat here crushed by all that had happened to Bakhirev. And there were lives which flowed somewhere alongside for a time but then drifted away into the sands—like that of Valgan.

"You know what?" Bakhirev said, turning to Chubasov. "These young folks want to build themselves a house. We'll find the funds and the materials. This is only the first, too. Later on we'll have a whole housing estate." And he told Chubasov his plans.

"And about reconstructing the works, I've another idea. Look. . . ."

He explained this too.

To do it all in one night, thought Chubasov, and a night like that! How much he could have done if he hadn't created obstacles for himself.

"What have you done?" burst from him. "What have you done? To carry people with you, you've got to think what you're doing, to be doubly, trebly. . . . The works has to be your very life, the air you breathe."

"And what else have I, now?" said Bakhirev quietly. "Not here," with a jerk of his head he indicated the wall of his office, "here!" with a slight movement of his pen he indicated his own breast. "Will you help me?"

"What else can I do?" Something—distress or a wry smile—twitched Chubasov's lip. "We're yoked together."

The secretary entered.

"The engineers are waiting in the director's office."

Bakhirev remembered that he was to move into Valgan's office that day, and had called the main executives for a meeting there.

The familiar panels and drapes. The familiar wine-coloured runner that seemed alternately to shrink and stretch out to infinity. Today again it was unbearably long. Everybody had come. From all sides he met sharp, inquisitive eyes. How would the new director behave after all the scandal? How would he get out of what was certainly a very awkward situation?

He felt naked. His whole being, with its mistakes and thoughts, belonged to these people with whom he would work year after year. We must make the new life together, he thought. They know everything about me. And it's quite right that they should know everything. Yet it was difficult, and the firmer his step, the greater the condemnation and perplexity in many eyes.

Roslavlev sat half turned away, his eyes hidden under his bristly brows. He doesn't want to look at me, thought Bakhirev. Then the brows moved, and for a moment eyes that challenged human conscience looked at him with anger, reproach and even a kind of simple injury. We backed you through thick and thin, they seemed to say, we looked up to you as the best of us all, and you roll in the muck! Bakhirev understood. The bristly-browed representative of the Roslavlev dynasty, a man forged from high alloy steel, would not forgive. And there were few things Bakhirev valued as he did Roslavlev's wordless, true, active, almost battle-trying friendship. It had taken a year of dogged work to win Roslavlev's high opinion. . . . Easier to gain what one did not have than to regain what one had lost.

He rose from Valgan's table and looked out of the window. Smoke and clouds were a soft gold. The risen sun lighted the tall chimneys, making them stand out warmly against the arching blue of the sky. The grass sparkled as though strewn with diamonds. The river danced in the light. This was the factory of Tina's picture—golden and rose—as though it had been washed and rinsed in the colours of dawn. He closed his eyes for a moment, then mastered himself.

"The day before yesterday I received instructions from the Ministry," he said. "I've already jotted down the preliminary ideas."

Everybody had noticed the momentary hesitation and wondered what was coming. But he spoke calmly. He was neither embarrassed nor too much at ease, he neither tacitly admitted guilt nor pretended that nothing had happened. He was calmly absorbed in business. He fixed his plans on the wall with drawing pins and spoke of his idea, which fired him and fired others more strongly with every moment.

"Transfer of the fuel units and engines to a specialised factory and expansion of other branches affords the possibility of introducing mass production, a flowing river of production which will sweep away hindrances and renew itself constantly. There will be an end of conservative ways, inevitable in mass production on a medium scale. We shall have the full advantage of the progressive essence contained in mass production."

He developed his plans; he fired their enthusiasm and despite everything enforced their respect for him as a man with fiery ardour, a man who could make mistakes, but who was dedicated heart and soul to the common cause, a man who for that cause could overcome all obstacles. Human curiosity was replaced by deep interest in future objectives. But Roslavlev still sat half turned away, his brows drawn together.

Chubasov listened and marvelled. What lay behind his words? Reserve, a rare self-control? Perhaps it was the pose of a proud man who did not want to appear weak and crushed? No. It was not a pose, it was not reserve. His face, changed within one day, the words he had spoken to Chubasov—"What else have I?" held open, unashamed grief. No, his enthusiasm for the future was sincere, his every word, every emotion was real.

Bakhirev's pale face seemed to say: "I have lost much. But nothing can rob any of us of the joy and honour of being men of good will, fighters with good weapons, victors in the difficult struggle for the happiness of two-and-a-half thousand million people."

Looking at that face of a fighter, those eyebrows drawn into a knot at the nose, flying up in a sharp angle at the temples, looking at the tufts of hair that seemed to rise in sheer excess of energy, at the athletic shoulders, Chubasov thought how difficult it was for a man of noble ideals, but sometimes losing balance from his own excess of strength, to direct that strength into the right channels so that it would flow evenly, without loss of power or devastating floods. What keen vision is needed for this, what firm steps and concentration on the aim ahead!

*Translated by Eve Manning  
Frontispiece by Tatiana Tolstaya*



# Poetry

Alexei SURKOV

## PATHS OF FRIENDSHIP

The azure skyways echo to the song  
Of engines humming loud in single chorus.  
We wing our way, by fair winds sped along,  
Above our country's verdant valleys glorious.

Once more my memory takes me far in flight  
Along the roads of Peace and, soaring over,  
I see the salt surf spray against the white  
Historic cliffs, the chalky cliffs of Dover.

I see the desert, simoom-swept, that lies  
Between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers;  
I see stern Caledonia's pale-blue skies,  
Through which the golden sunset faintly quivers;

And crag-lined Bothnia comes to my view;  
I hear the thund'ring Alpine avalanche.  
O Motherland! the friendship's roads that you  
Have sent us on—how far they branch!

Armed by your confidence, with strength sublime,  
By loneliness we never were surrounded.  
The ordinary folk in every clime  
For us, with brothers and good friends abounded.

And to our truth, as to the coming dawn,  
They march and struggle o'er the darkened, thorny way.  
O Comrade! What a joy to have been born  
A Soviet citizen upon this earth today!

*Translated by Louis Zelikoff*

Maxim RYLSKY

## TO FRIENDS IN EVERY LAND

*I* stretch my hand out o'er the oceans and the mountains  
To them whose sweat and blood, in ever flowing fountains,  
Transformed the arid deserts into fertile soil,  
Who mined the coal and tilled the earth with zealous toil.

I hear my brothers' voices, like the distant thunder,  
From darkest Africa and from the moss-grown tundra,  
From Cuba and Ceylon, from rocky mountain lands,  
And from the rolling deserts overswept with sands.

I hear hearts beat in every clime, like one heart beating,  
I see the eyes of those who brighter days are greeting;  
And like a trumpet call, their voice swells loud and clear:  
"All glory be to Peace—War's shadow, disappear!"

All brothers and all sisters do I greet sincerely—  
I know that as a brother they will love me dearly,  
That I, a son and soldier of my Soviet Land,  
Will find a mother there in every strand.

To you my hand goes out, O world of peaceful nations,  
But to the evil few who with their vile orations  
Would plunge this world of ours in blood—upon their head,  
On them, descend the curse that sears like molten lead.

*Translated by Louis Zellikoff*

# 40 YEARS of the Comsomol

Taisia ZHAROVA

## A SON OF HIS TIME

The book under review, *Poems, Letters, Diaries*, had a strange fate. It could have appeared a quarter of a century ago when the author, Sergei Chekmaryov, was in his early twenties. But the young poet felt that he had not the right to appear in print until he had more experience of life and had improved his skill by some years of work. He was eager to establish contact with the reading public but he did not want to present himself as a mere beginner. "First of all I want to love and only then to write about love; first I want to see, to live, and only then to write about life. In the first half of my life I shall write for myself and then for everybody." (From a letter to his brother.)

On the surface there was nothing out of the ordinary in Sergei Chekmaryov's life. He went to school. He joined the Comsomol. Later he entered an agricultural college, studying first at Voronezh, then in Moscow. His practical courses took him to the countryside which he loved for the rest of his life. When on graduation he had to choose his path in life, he decided to go as a zootechnician to a state farm in Bashkiria. Those were years of tension. The socialist transformation of agriculture was in progress, the kulaks as a class were being dispossessed.

In May 1933 the young poet's life was brought to a tragic end; his body was recovered from a river in Bashkiria. He had died from a blow on the temple; it could have hardly been an accident, he must have been murdered.

Had the poet lived he would have been 48 now, but in his works he is still young, as young as he had been then, twenty-five years ago. And today youth is still his main audience. They, people "with sparkling eyes" and "stubborn heads" who "guard like a treasure their Comsomol cards" are Chekmaryov's real contemporaries and this wise, ardent, splendid youthful book has been resurrected for them, the heirs to Korchagin, Gastello, Matrosov, and other heroes of Soviet youth. It is a book which will become a true friend to all who are seeking their place in life and who wish to live honourably and vividly.





Tachanka

*Dmitri Dmitriev*

Third Exhibition of Works by Young Moscow Artists



Youth

*Victor Popkov*

Third Exhibition of Works by Young Moscow Artists

Sergei Chekmaryov was known only to a narrow circle of readers during his life. His poetry appeared only in student wall-newspapers, in hand-written magazines, and more often in letters to his relatives and to his sweetheart, in his diaries. They were carefully preserved for many years by his brother, Anatoli Chekmaryov, who considered that he had no right to allow them to be published. It was only in 1955 that he decided to send his brother's notebooks to the magazine *Novy Mir*. Several of his poems and letters appeared in the January 1956 issue of *Novy Mir*. The laconic lines written "for himself" did not leave readers indifferent. The writer Konstantin Fedin sent the editor an enthusiastic letter congratulating the magazine on the discovery of "one of the finest sons of our times... a passionate and modestly heroic character." Chekmaryov's poems attracted the attention of many critics and, a year later, the Young Guard Publishing House put out a collection of his poems, letters and diaries.

In this way Sergei Chekmaryov's work has been rediscovered, and Soviet writing has been enriched by a new book which has already won wide popularity.

A note of originality is struck throughout this book which has been lovingly prepared for publication by the poet Mikhail Lukonin with the assistance of Stella Ilyichova.

Its contents are not arranged strictly under the headings, "Lyrics," "Diaries," or "Letters." To have done so would have been unnecessary, for it is very difficult to divide Chekmaryov the poet from Chekmaryov the man. We not only follow his life year by year, we are able to trace the growth of his poetic gift, the strengthening of his voice, the development of his skill. From his first childishly naive lines he turns to aphoristically precise, laconic lines of a fighting poet. This is not only the growth of a talent, it is the development of civic maturity; it is not only the searchings of the poetic voice but of a poet seeking his place in life. Chekmaryov's lyrical hero is the poet himself, a Comsomol member of the thirties, a warm-hearted, clever, courageous man for whom the word and the deed, life and poetry, are one, a man whose nature is quite free of any artificiality, anything forced.

Chekmaryov as a poet, though still immature, possessed not only a rare feeling for the times he lived in and keen political awareness, but also a constant desire to react to everything going on around him.

Even his letters were more in the nature of original *études* in which he wanted to record the living intonation of what he had heard, preserve a keenly observed detail. "I even like letter-writing," he confessed.

Some of his letters are conversations, others are humorous sketches. Some are partly in verse or in the form of a dialogue. Some have a sort of refrain to them, others might be called discourses. Character sketches are liberally sprinkled here and there. The writer was not merely searching for a form, or training his eye or pen, he felt a real urge to find his own voice. Artistic imagery embodied his vision of life. Throughout this book, life—not a literary life but real life breaking insistently into



poetry—makes itself felt through the lines. About the mass movement of the peasantry into collective farms he writes: "A snow-storm, whose flakes were the little white application forms, was falling—a fine present to the second Bolshevik spring." Etkul, where he worked, was not simply a Bashkirian village, it was "four thousand hearts, eight thousand eyes. . . a ship sailing to socialism."

Chekmaryov could see the humorous side of life too, and of his own place in it.

We see Chekmaryov the teacher being ironic about his anxiety before meeting his highly-experienced pupils, some of whom were over fifty: "I thought the caustic-tongued peasants would catch me out with some sort of ploughing method and drag some boggy or other out of their ancient practises." In another place he complains that the world spins in such a way as to make the journey to Sverdlovsk two hours longer—a reference to the fact that Sverdlovsk is in a different time zone than Moscow. "Every second is dear to people but the Earth goes on spinning." And there are other little jokes in which we catch the intonations of a man of the First Soviet Five-Year Plan, when the questions of tempos, speeds and periods of time were the burning questions of the day.

Among the extracts from Chekmaryov's prose works my favourites are the unfinished sketch, *The Horse*, with its vivid pictures of the horse's character and the writer's mockery at himself as a "theoretical rider"—a sketch written just before his death—and the short story *The Dog Was Drowned*.

It is difficult to realize that all these were written during moments taken off from the author's main job, often as he was travelling and up to his neck in work and worries. But then that is how an artist is born; everything around him is his school and teachers.

Chekmaryov was one of those artists who do not have to worry about finding subject-matter. Life gave birth to his poetry, his verses were forged for life, for action. Mayakovsky was his master. That is obvious not only from the familiar rhythms and intonations of his "step-patterned" verse, it is openly admitted by the poet himself:

On turning over  
the following page  
The reader will say  
in a boiling rage:  
"Now, now, Comrade Poet,  
what's your  
game?  
Why,  
Mayakovsky wrote the same!"  
Cool down,  
dear Comrade,  
and listen here:  
The Five-Year Plan  
depends on this year.



Sergei Chekmaryov

*Don't mind  
what my job is  
or who  
I'm like.  
The thing  
is to smash  
each time you strike!*

This poem is both an original poetic programme, a programme of the relations between poetry and life, and a stirring appeal for active participation in everything going on in your own country, in the world at large, an appeal for constant preparedness to be in the front line, which means to do everything:

*Clean,  
Wash,  
Guard,  
Go places  
Sweep,*

to quote Mayakovsky. And this attitude to life, this humanistic content of all their work, this hatred of evil and oppression gives an affinity to these two different poets.

Chekmaryov was a tireless searcher for new verse forms, he sketched, "tried out his voice," adjusted his language, and, like Mayakovsky, always reached the conclusion: "It's dull to play round with rhymes behind which there are no thoughts lurking."

The frantic tempo of life and the vast amount of social activity sometimes obliged the poet to lay his pen aside:

"I've stopped writing poetry..." he wrote to his brother. "When I go to book-shops now it isn't in search of Kirsanov or Selvinsky or even Mayakovsky. I'm looking for books on veterinary or on the organization of labour in kol-khozes. . . . I have a feverish passion for such books. Dull, grey booklets have suddenly become full of life and blood for me."

Here again we find a kinship with Mayakovsky who dropped writing poems to make the ROSTA posters, and with those many Soviet poets who during the years of struggle with fascism left their studies for dug-outs.

"Politics are absorbing. A man is blind unless he knows something about politics," Chekmaryov wrote in one letter. That is not merely the voice of the propagandist carrying on discussions with the Comsomols of Etkul; it is the

voice of the poet who learned to address his contemporaries in a language of great feelings, of the great demands of his time.

And if we trace the growth of Chekmaryov's poetic skill from beginning to end, we see quite clearly not only improvement in his verse—becoming freer, rhythmically more varied, richer in rhyme—but the way the poet is finding his voice. In the later poems, such as *Reflections at Kartaly Station* we recognize the hand of a master approaching maturity, a poet of profound originality. Nevertheless, in the collection under review, we find rather the continuing search of a young man who died at 23 than perfected poems.

Why then is this poet who was only trying to find his voice and achieved far from all that he was capable of, why is he so dear to us? Why do even his highly personal, private writings move his young readers so profoundly?

The life-story of a man, in which you can read the story of his country, is a splendid thing.

Such a life was Chekmaryov's, closely linked with everything his country was living through. Sergei Chekmaryov belongs to the generation of Soviet people who were born too late to fight in the Civil War beside young men like Korchagin, the hero of Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered*. But that generation found its own front line, its own place in the labour front.

Those were years of enormous difficulty, enormous achievement. Out of a Russia that was impoverished, hungry and weary a new country was born. Factories grew up amidst incredible hardship but at an incredible speed. The first state farms and kolkhozes were formed.

In 1929, the year of great change, Chekmaryov, who had just entered an agricultural college, was only 19. But he not only studied and dashed to Mayakovsky's evening lectures, he found time to be the "captain of the alphabet" at an adult educational course, helped to found a kolkhoz in the village of Saburovka where he took his practical course, and passionately believed that "the main thing now. . . is for man to know and love his work. . . and to see behind his work the long-range view of all our gigantic construction programme." And he himself could see that long-range view behind even the smallest things.

For him no work was insignificant. With equal enthusiasm he writes about the state farm, the struggle against the kulaks, the work of the political circle, the launching of an "oral newspaper," and reflects on what is happiness or love. And there is nothing theatrical or demagogic about these manly lines, which ring out like a warrior's oath:

*I shall be there where I must be,  
There where my class puts me.*

A city-dweller, a Moscovite, he goes as a zoo-technician to distant Bashkiria, for it is one of the outposts where the new, Soviet village is being born.



His lines about the steppes and the herds, and about the work he was given to do are written with unusual warmth and penetration.

His being passionately in love does not prevent him from asserting: "to be happy, to attain the greatest personal happiness a man must attach himself to some cause."

In this indissoluble connection of life and poetry, of the commonplace and the romantic, we recognize not only a real poet, a character that is complete and passionate and broad, but also a typical representative of Soviet youth. He was indeed a son of his glorious times, one for whom even the conventional New Year's greeting could only be phrased as: "Happy New Year and congratulations on the beginning of the Second Five-Year Plan!" (From a letter to his sister).

The whole battery of similes that he chooses, his original treatment of themes which had been used a thousand times before, show him to be a poet with a new outlook, with new conceptions of life.

Who were these people of the thirties, you may ask? Did not they live pretty badly? Were blast-furnaces and construction sites the only things that mattered for them? Did they know any other kind of love? Of course they did. They loved profoundly everything that was alive and bright, they loved everything that was active and creative, these people of the new time.

In his personal feelings he has the same inexorable integrity. He was not always happy in his love. But you can paraphrase love no more than you can paraphrase poetry. And do you have to? Chekmaryov's diary, poetry and letters show that he loved with the purity, nobility and strength of youth. But he never did things half-way, he never hid his feelings or his thoughts.

We see him in naive delight, boundlessly happy because

*In his heart  
love blooms  
with all the colours  
of the spectrum.*

But when he finds out that the woman he loves is someone else's wife and that she "is tired of love" and does not believe it possible to be happy and that she is expecting a baby, the young poet sings not only of "broken dreams," he is worried about his beloved, he cannot help thinking of what she has to go through. In one of his letters he writes:

"I never allowed myself to think that you could die. That would have been too horrible. I simply rejected the idea, because I knew that if I went on thinking about it I should go mad. It was very important—I mean, what happened to you—horribly painful and at the same time, very important. It is a sort of test for a woman. Did not you find yourself wondering what would happen, what sort of baby you were going to produce, whether it would be a nice one?"

"... the next day I went to the hospital. I was the first there. When I heard that you'd had your baby and that everything was all right my face lit up at once. The nurse smiled at me and went in to enquire whether it was a boy or a girl.

"It's a boy," she told me when she came back.

"I must have looked very happy because some old woman who turned up just then with a present looked at me and smiled too.

"Oh, it's a good thing you've got a son," she said. 'People don't get so happy about daughters.'

"I felt like telling her that the baby was as much mine as it was hers, but of course I kept quiet.

"I am very happy," you wrote.

"I am happy for your sake. (Do you remember, Tonya, how not long ago you recited Shevchenko, sang a little and then said: 'That all belongs to the past. But where is the present? There isn't any.') I understand your joy and your love for your son. Of course: when you assemble some wretched carburettor you can't help feeling a touch of pride that you have made a pretty thing out of a few parts. But you have made a human being, and not assembled it but created it. And born it through such long anguish and worry—but born it all the same—and it lies so sweet and warm, such a pretty snub-nosed little creature."

The beauty of Sergei Chekmaryov's feelings consists not only in the fact that he knows that in the most difficult moments of Tonya's life he "will be true to the end" but in his firm faith in his own love which cannot but prevail over the bitterness of an unhappy woman.

A much worse trial for such a love is the discovery that a wife should find a remote village boring and that she would decide not to come back from the town where she was studying. And one needs to have great convictions in the correctness of the path one had chosen, great faith in the strength of true love, to be able even in those moments when there is nothing but conscience and duty that stand in the way to answer to the inviting train:

*You open wide the door for me,  
But go, my friend, your westward way.  
The Steppe herself holds more for me:  
Here is my life... and here I stay—*

*Here, where the five years of the Plan  
Race to a goal that must be won.  
And if away from here I ran  
How would the Steppe's new life go on?*

*You smile? You've ample cause to doubt me,  
When I can make so vain a boast.  
The Steppe, of course, could do without me:  
'Tis I, not she, who'd suffer most.*

*To leave behind my faithful mare,  
The blue-eyed calves, the trusting kine,  
To leave the Steppe that claims my care,  
Would need a harder heart than mine!*

Chekmaryov was enchanted by that life of routine and romanticism; he was delighted to be a pioneer, in the direct line of fire. His diaries and letters are always full of buoyancy and humour.

"Send me a parcel," he writes to his family from the remote Bashkiran village. "What I need is:

"A bed (we sleep on the floor),

"smoked sausage (I have not eaten it for ages),

"writing paper (I have used it all),

"pants,

"tea (none here)

"and anything else you can think of."

These are the highest demands he has "in the sector of everyday life."

He dismisses every thought of returning to the comforts of Moscow, to his sweetheart, even when he has the right to do so.

The purity and clarity of his thoughts, the ardent enthusiasm of youth, and moral soundness make everything Sergei Chekmaryov wrote "for himself" touch the hearts not only of his contemporaries but also of young Soviet people of our time.



## THE HORSE

When I arrived at Bogachevka I knew virtually nothing about horses. A town dweller, brought up in Moscow, I was used to being confronted by the intelligent face of the tramcar; that was a part of my life, an intimate part. I had never been a slightest bit afraid of tramcars which are not as terrifying as they look. I had learnt to grab hold of a hand-rail on the run, to hang on to it pressed to the cold metal, and to slip through the impenetrable crowd of passengers. I knew the destination of each of the countless lines, I knew all a tram's habits and little tricks (for trams do allow themselves to play tricks).

And suddenly, instead of all that, I met a horse. I had never known a horse, never ridden one. Was it hard or easy to ride? Sometimes I thought it must be easy: you just got on to the horse and off you went. But then I recalled that there were places called riding-schools, that there were riding rules, and that Molchalín in *Wit Works Woe* fell off a horse ("He pulled the reins too hard, alas for the rider"). And, against my will, I felt frightened. Moreover, the horse allotted to me—a stallion—was very fierce, from all description. That was some luck! I say: from all description, because, fortunately, the horse was not in the district at that time, it was being used for sowing. "How stupid of them to have taken it!" said the chief. "They knew someone important was coming, and yet they took the best horse for the sowing."

My face expressed indignation but at heart I felt delighted by this turn of events and I took a modest satisfaction in the lazy, plodding grey horse which was given to me for the time being. For about a week I had been riding in a trap but at last the fatal moment came. I had to visit Farm 5 where the roads vigorously protested against vehicles of any kind. Anyway I had to take the plunge sooner or later.

"Saddle my horse," I said casually, as if I had spent my whole life giving such orders.

They went off to saddle my mount. I tried to still the palpitation of my heart by coughing. What I was most afraid of was that something comic would happen as I rode out of the village, something that would certainly not enhance the authority of Comrade Chekmaryov, senior zoo-technician and assistant manager of the state farm. I would most gladly have led the horse by his bridle two versts from the village and only then have tried to mount him.

"He's ready. Lazy, that's all that's wrong with him," said the groom, slapping the grey on the crupper.

Myself, all I wanted was that the horse should be as lazy as possible. Would I manage even to get into the saddle, I wondered? However, to my surprise, I found that quite easy.

The horse ambled quietly through the gate. I felt very comfortable. I was beginning to experience a natural sense of pride, when suddenly one of the grooms took it into his head to give the grey a touch of the switch. I don't know what gave him this idea or, in fact, how there happened to be a switch handy, but these fatal circumstances changed the picture at once. Encouraged by the flick, the horse broke into a trot, and I at once began to bump up and down comically in the saddle. I clutched at the pommel to save myself from falling, and lost the reins. Whereupon the grey turned to the nearest cottage, stopped in the most impudent manner outside a window, and stuck its nose up against the glass. Astonished faces pressed against the other side of the window. Red in the face I gathered the reins in my hands, turned the horse round and. . . do you think I galloped off? The devil I did. I rode away at a snail's pace. They say one does not have eyes in the back of one's head, but, to tell the truth, I saw the pack of state-farm workers standing behind me in the stable yard watching my departure.

Continuing this way for a couple of versts I tried to get the grey to break into a trot. Alas, every time that happened I bounced so hard in the saddle that I had to cling to the pommel and to hang on hard to keep my seat at all. The horse took advantage of this to take me where he pleased. It was only when it changed step that I could recover the reins and bring him back to the path. And then it would be the same story all over again.

Soon I had to abandon any idea of trotting, for I was suffering such agony from bouncing in the saddle that I could bounce no more.

Surely, I asked myself, surely not all riders bounce in the saddle like this, but if not, what do they do not to bounce? But I couldn't solve that riddle. Luckily, half way to the farm I met the people I was riding over to see, so I turned back with them. When their trap shot forward and the grey raced after them I tried vainly to restrain him. I could no longer stand riding at a trot, not only because of the pain but because it would have revealed my helplessness. I was desperate at not being able to hold and stop that wretched horse but when it began to canter I found that by standing in the stirrups I could keep on more easily; so I rode the whole way like that, forcing the horse into a canter every time it changed into a trot. The only inconvenience was that I could not control the horse, so it went where it wanted.

Later I asked my companions whether they had noticed that I didn't know how to ride. Apparently they hadn't. Anyway, I returned to Bogachevka shaken to bits. And yet it should be noted that being for the first time in my life on a horse, I covered about twenty versts in all—a pretty respectable distance. I felt that the next time I would be happier carrying the horse on my own back than riding on his. But another day dawned and when the sun looked at me with a question in its eye I promised it solemnly that I would not leave the saddle for the whole of the next week and would master the equestrian art.

I kept my promise.

I did not make friends with the grey. I was afraid to bridle it (it bit me once, rather badly, too). I was afraid of getting hold of it and I had difficulty in getting it out of the herd. Besides, he developed a limp—he had probably strained a tendon. So I was glad to part with him when Denissov, on leaving for Sterlita-mak, lent me his horse for awhile.

Denissov's mare, which I named Maruska, had nothing prepossessing about her at first sight. She was a small and insignificant mare; it was not for her looks but for her wonderful character that I fell in love with her. What does a wonderful character in a horse mean? In Maruska it meant that she was not lazy, that she did not require the crop or the whip, that she responded to the touch of the reins or the pressure of the knees, and knew when to trot or to canter or simply to walk. Maruska had staying power, her little heart worked well, and she could cover up to forty versts a day. She was conscientious, she never stopped on her own accord, or changed from a trot into a walk, however tired she was. She was fast: her short legs moved very well, she was. . . but if I were to start enumerating all the good points of my dear Maruska I should never finish. She was my first love among horses and as such is unforgettable. Besides, she liked me (I don't say she loved me—that would be probably going too far), but at least she was respectful: she didn't kick, she didn't bite, she licked my hands, she let me saddle her when I occasionally left her untethered.

And so she and I lived as friends. As she bore me about the steppes, where we lived on grass and bread, she mainly preferring the grass. But suddenly unhappiness came to us. Incidentally, we should have been ready for it. Denissov came back and asked for his horse. To make things worse he said I had let her grow thin. That, of course, wasn't true: she had grown fatter not thinner in my care—everybody said that, which made me feel all the more hurt at his reproach. Maruska had been in Denissov's care for a whole year before I took her over and knew him better than me. The manager was also on his side. It was my duty to return her, but I could not bring myself to do it. I could not imagine life without Maruska. What was I going to ride? There was not another horse I even wished to look at. I felt upset and depressed during those days. My heart ached in anticipation of the inevitable parting. The unloved grey had already been returned to me but I surreptitiously led Maruska out of the stables, saddled her, and rode to the most remote farm. I rode for four days and was a happy man; but, alas, I had to return her sometime. On the evening of my arrival I put Maruska in the stable. Next morning, before sunrise, Denissov left on her.

But she brought him no happiness. I met him a little later at Farm 1 where we were attending a meeting.

"Where is Maruska?" I wrote on a scrap of paper which I passed to him. In reply he wrote:

"Didn't she come back to you?"

He told me later that Maruska had thrown him and run off no one knew where. He hadn't managed to catch her.

Maruska was never found. I was furious with Denissov and he himself said: "It would have been better if she had stayed with you."



## HAPPINESS...

*(Excerpt from a Diary)*

We live only once, and we must live as happily as possible.

But what is happiness? Happiness does not exist by itself. To be happy, to experience the greatest personal happiness, a man must attach himself ardently to some cause, some problem, some idea.

When, in fact, is a man happy? When he has achieved what he wants. When is a man very happy? When he has achieved what he wants very much. The intensity of feeling depends on the intensity of desire. If a man passionately wishes to reach some goal, if his desire gives him no rest, if he cannot sleep at night because of that passion—then the satisfaction of this desire brings him such happiness that the whole world seems to shine for him, the ground to sing under his feet.

And even if he does not achieve his goal, what is important is that the man should passionately desire to achieve it, to dream and burn with that dream. Then a man displays his full capacity, he strives boldly against all obstacles, each step forward envelops him in a wave of happiness, every failure stings like a whip, he suffers and rejoices, cries and laughs—he lives. But if there are no such passionate desires then there is no life either. A man of no desire is to be pitied. He has nowhere to draw life from, for he lacks the source of life and no diversion can fill the emptiness of his being unless he is a fool by nature.

Pisarev was absolutely right when he said that the greatest happiness a man can experience is to be in love with an idea to which he can devote himself totally, without hesitation.

You may say that a man can devote himself to a reactionary idea too. Of course he can, and for capitalists, for example, that is a quite natural state, but for people who are not vitally bound to capitalism such devotion is unnatural, though it is to be met. It is unnatural because it is difficult for a normal human being to attach himself to a historically doomed cause.

Besides, it is a pleasure to devote oneself to a cause which in the long run is going to enrich the life of all mankind. Only degenerates can take delight in and further causes which make children wither away and dim the eyes of grown-ups.

Thus, I am ready to fight for a better future for mankind, not for the sake of ascetic abnegation; that struggle will make my life fuller and richer because I feel vitally interested in its aims. And the fact that later on, when the grass will grow on my grave, people will say a few good words about me, can only sustain my present convictions.

## FROM A LETTER...

For the sake of clarity I would draw the construction of the human brain in this way; imagine a dark, windowless building. Inside run corridors, many corridors, a whole labyrinth. Some brains have more, some less corridors. These corridors are lit by electric lamps. In some corridors the lamps are brighter than in others. The walls of the corridors are interrupted by doors, opening every metre, say, into rooms. And each room contains various things, some more, some less. Well, these things in the rooms are human knowledge. Some have many things, others little. The system of corridors itself, whether they form good communications or run into blind alleys, represents human consciousness, the mind itself. A clever man will quickly take things from one corridor to another, while a stupid one is still lugging them out of a blind alley.

Finally, the light is the clarity of the mind, its logic. If a corridor is well lit all the things which the mind brings along it are clearly seen, you can see what they are for, but if the corridor is dark then there are muddles, one thing is mistaken for another, the wildest conclusions are drawn and so on.

Applying this comparison to myself, I must say I have not too many things in my rooms, my corridors have a fair number of twists and turns, but not too many, and to make up for it there are thousand-candle power lamps burning in those corridors. In the corridors of my brain lamps cast a brilliance like sunlight, a light in which no smuggling can go undetected.

If I know trigonometry it means you will never get through with a wrong transformation. If I know Lenin's theory of imperialism you will never be able to palm off on me a false idea as a Leninist one.



Moskvoretsky Bridge in Winter (1911)

*Konstantin Yuon*





Spring Sun (1915)

*Konstantin Yuon*



Self-Portrait (1953)

*Konstantin Yuon*



Uspensky Cathedral in Zagorsk (1922)

*Konstantin Yuon*



Konstantin YUON

## MEDITATIONS OF AN ARTIST

*Below we publish several statements about art made by the late member of the Academy of Arts, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. Konstantin Yuon (1875-1958).*

*Konstantin Yuon, who began his creative career at the end of the 19th century, has gone down in the history of Soviet art as the custodian of the realistic traditions of the finest Russian painters.*

*After 1917, along with the old themes which revealed the national features of Russian life, the artist also turned to themes of the Revolution, and the events and people of the Soviet epoch.*

*The remarks published below have been taken from Yuon's articles, books, and letters. They permit us to glance into his profoundly individual inner world as an artist, and also shed light upon the general principles governing the creative methods of Soviet artists as a whole.*

*Reproductions of Yuon's pictures have been published in Soviet Literature, issues Nos. 1 and 4, 1951, and in issue No. 6, 1956.*

## PAINTING

The aim of painting is not to serve as a substitute for living objects and nature but to express them through the poetic language of art, through artistic generalizations, and the picturesque imagery which it commands.

The two missions of painting—to interpret and express living objects and, at the same time, to charm the eye with the beauty and perfection of art itself—determine all its different forms. The domination of one or another form in works of art gives rise to all its different types and styles.

Just as the ability to “hear” is insufficient for a study of music, since it is necessary also to possess a feeling of music to “be able to listen,” likewise it is

insufficient for the painter merely to be able to see; he must also be capable of acquiring the joy of observing.

In essence, painting is nothing but creative seeing.

Speaking of myself as an artist, I cannot refrain from mentioning my fanatic, heathen love for the sun and the radiant, sparkling colours it squanders, which always add buoyancy to our work and our good cheer.

The solar spectrum is the entire palette of colours, all the painting possibilities.

I sought that spectrum of colours in the early spring, when the sun began to play upon the blanket of snow and aroused the earth from its winter's slumber.

How many times was I enchanted by the music of the symphonies of colours created by the spring rays on the most sensitive and receptive material—the pure snow.

... I was carried away by the thought of expressing the existence of beauty by means of painting. The result was a whole series of works made in the most picturesque towns of the Russian provinces.

#### DEMANDS MADE OF ART

Soviet reality has advanced a number of vital demands made of art, namely: a) significance of content; b) a new form without which there can be no real perception of that content; c) monumentality and comprehensibility, so that art is understood by the masses, and d) great interest in man.

#### ELEMENTS OF PAINTING

The favourite and chief elements in my painting, those that attracted me most powerfully, were the following eight: 1) architecture—for its definiteness, contrasts, exactness and constructiveness; 2) the snow—for its exceptional purity and sensitivity to all influences of light; 3) the sky—for offering the greatest expanse for movements of the brush and dynamic colour combinations; 4) light—for its magic powers; 5) space—for its ability to transform, generalize and absorb all that is tangible, for its ability to embrace all that is visible; 6) movement—for the living nerve it imparts, for its organic tie with the movement of all the elements; 7) the sun—as the invariable friend of painting, as the source of light and colour, and, in fact, the main theme in painting; 8) the human body—as the most tangible and most delicate material, as the symbol of artistic plastics, artistic tangibility.

## SOCIALIST REALISM

The chief character in socialist art is man, symbolizing part of society. The art of socialism is directed mainly towards the present and the future. Its always optimistic, active, creative nature and the consciousness of its aims constitute its characteristic feature.

Socialist realism presupposes the maximum development of art in the remote regions of the Soviet Union, be it large national or small autonomous republics.

Socialist realism places no programme restrictions on art, but merely demands that it be not in contradiction with the basic principles of materialistic philosophy.

The struggle for this philosophy, for the dialectic use of all the forms of realistic art in all their diversity is what constitutes the tasks of socialist realism.

The tasks of the artist of our times also include the quest for new aesthetics, for the living beauty of socialist reality.



# Writers of the Russian Federation Prepare for Their Congress

Leonid SOBOLEV

## IN PREPARATION FOR THE CONGRESS

*As reported in an earlier issue, towards the end of the last year the Union of Soviet Writers resolved to organize a Writers' Union of the R.S.F.S.R. Below we publish an account by the chairman of the Union organizational committee, the writer Leonid Sobolev, of the committee's plans and activities.*

The organizational committee's activities have proceeded along two lines: firstly, organizing the new Union and its first constituent congress, which is our main function; secondly, directing the literary life of the Russian Federation's two-thousand strong membership who issue seventeen magazines and nearly fifty other literary periodicals.

We have a vast field of work, with innumerable exceedingly interesting creative problems awaiting our attention: there are the new processes of life that are developing before our very eyes to talk over; the numerous problems of human relationships in modern times, which have being barely dealt with as yet in our literature; the individual works of novelists, poets, short story writers, and critics; and books for children and young folk.

The Union will work for the faithful and profound reflection of the life of the Soviet people in books of high artistic merit. It will oppose both the tendency to picture our life one-sidedly and falsely and the opposite tendency to draw a saccharine picture insulting to the feelings and intelligence of our readers.

The organizational committee is in this important matter performing the function of the Union's future Board, which is to be elected at the forthcoming

congress, except, of course, that the Board will conduct this work on a much larger scale. On the basis of the past year's experience we expect to suggest a more effective organizational structure and new methods of leadership.

Maintaining personal contact with writers is, I am convinced, the most effective way in which the organizational committee (and subsequently, the Union) can assist them. It was this consideration that prompted us to make a practice of sending committee members to various towns in the regions, territories, and autonomous republics of the R.S.F.S.R. Earnest private talks instead of platform speeches, frank, intimate chats in the course of a pleasant walk instead of the official procedure of a conference, are sure to prove an effectual method of everyday ideological leadership. Everyone who understands the Party principle, the high ideological function of literature correctly and who sincerely desires its all-round development and improvement is sure to find the right approach, to hit on simple and convincing words with which to help other writers in their creative work.

I know that in my own case an hour-and-a-half's talk in the offices of the Kazakhstan territorial committee of the Party in 1935 changed the course of my literary career. They drew such an exciting, such a rapturous, I would say, picture there of the resources the Revolution had uncovered in Kazakhstan that the title "Storehouse of Socialist Wealth" flashed through my mind there and then and determined the tenor of a whole series of subsequent articles of mine. Strange to say, it was in the course of this talk about zinc and copper and coal that my life-long friendship with Kazakhstan and its literature was formed.

Since it was the vital task of the organizational committee to further mutual acquaintance, it immediately began to organize meetings with writers in all parts of our vast Federation, and, it must be said, with good results. To name only a few of them, there were the conference of contributors to the journal *Sibirskiy Ogn*i (Siberian Lights) in Novosibirsk; a seminar for young prose writers of the Russian Federation in Leningrad; a conference on children's literature in Kazan; a seminar for the prose writers of Daghestan at which books written in ten different languages were discussed; a seminar for young poets of the Russian Federation in Smolensk. We have organized Yakut, Adygei, and Karachai-and-Cherkess literary gatherings in Moscow. Towards the end of May we convened a conference of Siberian children's writers and arranged a meeting of young writers in Stavropol.

With this same aim of getting mutually acquainted and discovering new literary talent, the members of the organizational committee have visited various cities in the Russian Federation, among them Kaluga, Kaliningrad, Barnaul, Ufa, and Kazan. We have begun to organize (and hope that this will become a permanent feature) discussions either of the collected works or of some individual book by one or another author residing and working in regions and territories of the Federation.

The above are only a few of the things we have done. I shall not list them all. As for our plans for the nearest future, these include seminars for young

writers in Kuibyshev, Krasnoyarsk, Stalingrad and the Mordovian and Mari Autonomous Republics, and a seminar in Khabarovsk for Far-Eastern writers.

Some of our activities coincided with important events in the literary and public life of the Federation, for in this period writers' congresses were held in 13 of its autonomous republics. They were attended by members of the organizational committee and of the Moscow branch of the Union. We did our best to make these congresses an effective contribution to the preparations for the future all-Russian congress.

One of the most important, if not *the* most important, objects of the above activities is to draw young writers, especially those residing in the outlying parts of the Federation, into the organizational orbit of the Union. Our task is to discover and train young writers as our successors and the continuators of the great ideals of Soviet literature. As yet, we have been following the time-tested method of organizing seminars and meetings for this purpose, but other ways and means must also be found. The newspaper *Literatura i Zhizn* (Literature and Life) published by the Union of Writers of the R.S.F.S.R. and our new Sovremennik Publishing House are bound to be instrumental in this regard.

A very good example, I think, has been set by Leningrad, and Moscow is now beginning to follow it. Leningrad writers have established personal contacts with their colleagues in Pskov, Novgorod and Velikiye Luki and literary associations have already been formed there.

This is a praiseworthy beginning: the larger cultural centres of our Federation must help budding writers in the neighbouring regions and towns. If Leningrad, say, "adopts" the Northwest, Moscow, the central regions, Rostov-on-Don, the South, and Khabarovsk, the Far East, we will have strong focal points to aid us in discovering and fostering young talents more effectively.

Since its formation the organizational committee has admitted to the Union more than twenty young Russian prose writers from Novosibirsk, Krasnodar, Voronezh, Rostov-on-Don, Cheboksary, Astrakhan, Udmurtia, the Khabarovsk Territory, Chelyabinsk, Perm, Ryazan and Kaluga, and a number of young poets from Kursk, Gorky, Vladimir, Tula, Yaroslavl, Perm, Khabarovsk, Kaluga, Saratov, and Vladivostok. I cite all these geographical names to show that the influx of fresh literary forces involves the whole of the Russian Federation. But this is only the beginning. Many pleasant surprises still await us, I am sure, for, encouraged by their success these first names are sure to be followed by others.

Our aim has been to bring to the forthcoming congress a strong force of new young writers. I could now name many young prose writers and poets we had never heard of before.

Marina Nazarenko, for instance, lives and works in Novosibirsk. Her novel *Chip of the Old Block* was published in *Sibirskiy Ogn'. Dawn*, the best of her most recent short stories, appeared in the Moscow journal *Oktyabr*, No. 2. Nazarenko is a forceful, dramatic writer who prefers to deal with the vital themes of modern life. Her outstanding trait is modesty: she was graduated from the





Bright Day (1952)

*Konstantin Yuon*



On the Volga (1952)

*Konstantin Yuon*

Gorky Literary Institute in Moscow about nine years ago but only recently began to appear in print, for until now she considered her work insufficiently mature.

Vyacheslav Palman is a Krasnodar agronomist whose works have been published in the Moscow literary magazine *Nash Sovremennik* (Our Contemporary) and *Vokrug Sveta* (Around the World). His *Notes of an Agronomist* testify to his close ties with present-day rural life, to that knowledge of life that is to be obtained only from everyday participation in it.

Olga Bubnova, the author of *The Story of a Poet* (Ivan Nikitin) works in a Voronezh museum. *Oktyabr*, No. 2, contains her short story *Happiness*, treating of the high moral qualities of the Soviet citizen.

Pyotr Lebedenko was formerly a flyer. His novel *Blue Highways*, a story about young flyers and building workers, has been accepted for publication by the Rostov magazine *Don*.

Nadezhda Babayenko, a thirty-year-old doctor in the Chuvash Autonomous Republic, has written an interesting novel called *District Doctor* (published in Cheboksary). Her criticism of certain undesirable aspects of life is sharp, but because she vigorously affirms the positive aspects too, her novel is on the whole a profoundly realistic piece of work.

Two other interesting newcomers are the naval writers Victor Konetsky, a 28-year-old Leningrad navigator, and Captain Infantiyev, of the Engineering Branch. They both have had volumes of short stories published in Leningrad. Konetsky has the wry humour typical of navymen and a caustically critical pen, while Infantiyev tends to the heroic. His best story, *The Technician*, tells of a group of technicians who risked piloting some planes so as not to leave them in the hands of the enemy. He writes with deep and passionate feeling and his characters are lovingly portrayed.

I might also mention Nadezhda Verkhovskaya, a Leningrad journalist whose two books, *A Place Under the Sun* and *The Young Volga*, discussed at the Leningrad seminar, reveal marked talent; Victor Safronov, whose novel *Whit Sunday* has been accepted for publication by the Moscow journal *Novy Mir*; Nikolai Sladkov, who is already known for his nature stories and stories about geologists and topographers; Boris Zhilin, of Astrakhan, whose novel *Black Flags* has had favourable reviews at the Soviet Writer Publishing House; Gennadi Krasilnikov, of the graduating class of the Gorky Literary Institute, an Udmurt by nationality; Grigori Khodjer, a 20-year-old Nanai school-teacher in the Khabarovsk territory, who was one of the winners of the literary contest at the recent Youth Festival in Moscow; Richi Dostyan, a young Armenian woman living in Leningrad who writes in Russian; Victor Moskovkin, of Yaroslavl, a 30-year-old journalist, who has just been graduated from the Gorky Literary Institute and is the author of a trenchant novel about young workers called *How's Life*, *Semyon*?

Among the young poets who show more than ordinary talent are Nadezhda Grigoryeva, of Kursk, who has published her first volume of verse, called *Lyrical Diary*; Alexander Lyukin, of Gorky, author of a number of interesting poems published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and *Sovetskaya Rossiya*; Vladimir Gneushev,



author of several volumes of verse (*In Distant Seas, Keep Your Anchors Up* and *The Blue Bird*); Valentina Godovanova, an English teacher in Yaroslavl, who writes lyrical verse and translates Rabindranath Tagore.

Many are the new names that have already come to the fore, but how many more still may! For Soviet life, whose activity has risen to such an intense point in the years since the historical Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, cannot but inspire young folk with the urge to express their thoughts and feelings in prose and verse.

A dull life naturally gives rise to dull art. A brilliantly radiant life full to the brim with heroic activity and animated by great ideals inspires a great and radiant art.

Those who "build" their books on the shifting sands of negation, pessimism, intellectual confusion and mistrust of the future are deeply in error. Literature cannot be expected to stand on shifting sands. A book of this kind may last a month or two, but after a while it is bound to be swallowed up by the sand, leaving not even a mound to mark its grave, as we have all seen very clearly during these past two years.

No, it is the literature of affirmation, the literature of human hopes and faith in the great powers of the multilingual, multiracial peoples inhabiting the planet on which we happen to have been born that will stand through the ages.

This truth has been underlined for us by the Party's statements on the ties between literature and life. It was this truth that was brought out once more in the talks with Khrushchov in the Central Committee offices. It is our duty to follow the path that has been indicated and cleared for us.

Our way of life—a confident, constructive life inspired by a great goal—the intelligently patterned and forward-thrusting life of the Soviet people—will itself give birth to literary talent still unknown to us. Our task is to seek out and safeguard the tender young shoots and guide their growth.

Alexei KARTSEV  
Victor BANYKIN  
Yuri KORINETS

## WRITERS MEET IN ARKHANGELSK

As early as last spring writers of the Russian Federation began to prepare for their first congress, to be held in Moscow in November, 1958.

Of course, in these preparations, the most important place was taken by books and manuscripts, by the discussion of their success or failure carried out in a friendly yet exacting way, and by the literary advice given from one author to another. In a word, all that goes to make up the very basis of the life of our writers' organizations.

Such literary discussions and seminars were held not only in Moscow and Leningrad and other big towns of the Russian Federation. They were held in the capitals of the autonomous republics within the Federation and in certain regional centres. This pre-congress activity spread to the most far-flung writers' communities. The organizational committee of the Union of Writers of the Russian Federation sent its representatives to all parts of the country to take part in the literary seminars.

We three went to one of these meetings in Arkhangelsk. We went there at the end of May, just at the beginning of the romantic "White Nights."

There, in the big town at the mouth of the great Northern Dvina, the authors of stories, verse, and essays from many districts of the Arkhangelsk region came together. There were professional writers and journalists and amateur writers: seamen, lumbermen, fishermen, electricians and aviators.

The participants of the seminar read and discussed the most varied writing, some of which was unsatisfactory and insignificant. Many unpleasant but justified things were said; some people were disappointed, but despite all this, the seminar was thoroughly enjoyable.

There we met Evgeni Bogdanov, the editor of one of the local newspapers and the author of a small collection of stories called *Spring*. His readers enjoy his fresh literary talent despite all the defects that are to be expected in the work of an inexperienced writer.

You are immediately captivated by the first story which gives the book its name. True, there are too many characters in it. But the main ones Tasya Spitsina, the young woman agronomist, and Matvei Ilyich, the chairman of the collective farm are not easily forgotten. Their work is difficult but essential and they fight to awaken a genuine socialist consciousness in backward people, such as the team-leader Pestunov. In another story, *The Road to the North*,

Evgeni Bogdanov seems almost reluctant to show his characters in action. He explains rather than pictures. However, the reader is inevitably moved by the emotional experience undergone by the railway guard Vasili Nesterkov who by chance meets the wife and daughter he abandoned and who feels in his heart all the depths of the irreparable mistake he made long ago when he left his family.

The character of the district Party secretary Nikolai Belov in *A Man Is Born* is well drawn and touches the reader's heart. The same can be said of the teacher in *The Arithmetic Lesson*, and the milkmaid Yevdokia Petrovna in the story to which she gives her name, which is probably one of the best in the book. Bogdanov's pictures of the scenery of his native region are very vividly drawn.

The seminar praised the short story called *Nina* by Andrei Startsev, a young journalist from Kotlas.

Startsev speaks of the most commonplace events, of how the young collective-farm milkmaid goes to evening school, of how she is infatuated with the reporter from the local paper, of how the live-stock expert Ivan Matveyevich who gives her friendly help in her studies hides his great love for her in a patient and modest way. All this is told with a lack of artificiality that is most endearing. The author needs to polish his story, but the main thing is that its characters are truly lovable.

Besides the young writers at the Arkhangelsk meeting, there were also representatives of the older generation.

All were glad to see there the former soldier Vasili Ivanov who is now a teacher, a man who though getting on in years knows how to tell stories in a very young and enthusiastic way about the fascinating northern regions where he lives.

Vasili Ivanov's hunting tales were discussed in manuscript. One of them has already been published in *Yenisey*, the Siberian literary journal. We, for our part, thoroughly recommended his stories to the regional publishing house in Arkhangelsk. One of the participants of the seminar was quite right when he said that Ivanov's characters are people with a great heart. This is why, in his book, each of the hunting sketches becomes a kind of page from a "diary of his heart," the journal of a mind that is sensitive and poetic, which is in itself kindred to the beauty of the North.

The seminar spent a good deal of time discussing *Sever* (The North), the literary journal of the Arkhangelsk branch of the Writers' Union, and the writing published in it. This included Pavel Lyskov's story *Grim Autumn*, Nikolai Zhernikov's sketch *Dmitri Ryumin*, and stories by Evgeni Kokovin and Yuri Zhukov. Other interesting books that have been published recently by members of the Writers' Union in Arkhangelsk were also discussed. Among these were *Son of Khosei* by Georgi Suftin, which describes how the Nenets people are building a new life, and Ivan Poluyanov's collection of stories called *The Master of the Fiery Forest*.

You may want to know something about the work of Arkhangelsk poets, or to ask whether they had put any new works of interest before the seminar.



We can tell you that the seminar of poets did a great deal of work and discussed the work of seven poets in two days. Despite the shortness of time available, all participants agreed that the seminar was of interest. We are very pleased to name two young poets who are very different yet very close to each other. They are Oleg Dumansky and Fyodor Shirshov who both show great enthusiasm for the world around them and seek to capture it continually in their verse.

Oleg Dumansky offered for discussion his first book of verse called *North Wind*. The poems are moving for their liveliness, for their warm human feelings. Some of them go straight to one's heart, for they are very imaginative. However, the critics advised the young poet to give his work more of the colour of the North and to make his poetry more distinctive. It is a pity that since his first book written in 1955, Dumansky has published hardly anything new.

The discussion of Fyodor Shirshov's work was also of considerable interest. The poems that he put before the seminar were somewhat variable in value but he is undoubtedly a talented writer. He knows and loves the village and its people and has a great feeling for country scenery.

The seminar praised Valentin Kochetov's first books. He is a seaman who speaks of the sea and those who sail it. In his collection of verse published under the title *Love and the Sea* and in his new manuscript there are several good poems. But some of them are rather too rhetorical and wordy, with far-fetched images.

The book of children's verse by Vasili Kalinkin also contains some successful poems.

Yes, a fine team of writers is growing up in the North!

Some people still think of the stern regions of the North as the backwoods. But in fact a new life is flourishing there, a new Soviet culture is growing up, not only in industry (the lumber or fishing industries), not only in the economic development of the northern sea coast regions. It is growing up in other ways too. For example, one of the young Arkhangelsk writers, the school-teacher Victor Fedotov, published a new translation in the journal *Sever*. He translated *Stanzas on Freedom* by the 19th-century American poet James Russell Lowell, and at the seminar of Russian poets held in Smolensk he won praise for his translations of many poems by the Scottish poet Robert Burns. The books of some young Arkhangelsk authors are published in Moscow, as is the case of Mikhail Skorokhodov.

As for the fiction writers, Evgeni Kokovin is known both in the Soviet Union and abroad. His books have been translated into Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Rumanian, and Bulgarian.

Such examples can also be found in other local writers' organizations.



# Books in Review

## This Girl Was a Great Poet

*Lessia*, by Mikola Oleinik, Kiev, 1958 (in Ukrainian).

The life of the well-known Ukrainian writer Lessia Ukrainka,<sup>1</sup> who died in 1913, is in itself a story of great courage. From her childhood she suffered from tuberculosis of the bone. Later she was to know much grief and suffering. She began to write in the dark years of reaction that followed the defeat of the Russian revolution of 1905.

But her books are a hymn to life, freedom and justice, sung by a person of iron will who passionately loves the people. Her life was not long, but she devoted it entirely to fighting for the people's happiness. The heroes of most of her poems and plays are people who cannot be subjugated; they understand that it is not enough to know what is happening or to foresee events, they know that action is essential for victory.

The Ukrainian poet Ivan Franko wrote about Lessia Ukrainka that "Since the time of Shevchenko's poem known as his *Testament* the Ukraine has not heard such strong, burning, poetic words as those that pour from the mouth of this weak and sickly girl."

Now the Ukrainian writer Mikola Oleinik recently published his book *Lessia* which is the story of the childhood of this fine poetess. From beginning to end the story develops in a moving, lyrical stream which resembles the songs and verse of the national Ukrainian poetess.

With great delicacy Oleinik depicts this girl who had such a searching, inquisitive mind, who so loved life and people.

But the main thing that you feel in *Lessia* is her gift of poetry, her picturesque and emotional vision of the world, her poignant, constant desire to transform all that she heard, all that she saw into music, into songs and words.

The author has succeeded in giving us a picture of Ukrainian life as seen through the eyes of his heroine. We go with Lessia to the village fête on St. John's Eve, we hear the plaintive and the gay strains of Ukrainian songs, we see the young people merry-making, but we also notice the impoverished peasants who are trying to earn a few pennies. And we hear the song, about Karmeliuk, the leader of the peasants' revolt, sung by the blind *kobzar*.

The pictures of the people who surrounded Lessia are drawn most vividly. There is the girl's mother, the well-known Ukrainian poetess Olessia Pchelka; there is her brother who, like Lessia, is fascinated by folklore, and her father, a "political suspect," who was the first to become enthusiastic about his daughter's early poem *Hope*, in which she wrote:

*Of freedom and joy in life I'm bereft,  
And one, only one desire have I left,  
My gentle Ukraine once more would I see,  
My country where all is precious to me.*

The composer Lysenko, who appreciated Lessia's musical talent, also comes into the story. We see the playwright Staritsky and many others who, under the cruelty of the reactionary tsarist regime, were the passionate defenders of progressive Ukrainian culture.

When you read the book you understand how Lessia, as we get to know her from the

<sup>1</sup>Lessia Ukrainka—pen-name of the Ukrainian writer Larissa Kosach-Kvitka.

book, is able later on to write her wonderful poems, for she bore the gift of poetry from her very childhood.

It is significant that the book begins with the story about the little girl who, left alone in the woods, decided to climb an oak-tree. It was a big tree with many branches and her hands were small and frail. But she was determined not to be overcome by such difficulties. She climbed up the tree and proudly looked down over the bright, wide world that lay below. She stretched out her tiny figure delightedly as though she wanted to fly still higher.

And we remember Lessia Ukrainka like this when we have finished Oleinik's story.

## Stories About Fučík

*Stories About Julius Fučík*, by Ida Radvolina, Moscow, 1956.

Julius Fučík would have been 55 years old this year. It is difficult to imagine him a man of this age, for all his photographs and the books he wrote and those written about him present him as young, gay, and full of the joy of life. And that is how he appears to us in the book written by Ida Radvolina.

Julius Fučík visited the Soviet Union twice. The first time was in 1930, when he crossed the boundary illegally. The second time was in 1934-1936, as correspondent of the newspaper *Rude Pravo*. It is about this second trip that Ida Radvolina tells us in her reminiscences. They are valuable and interesting for their truth as presented by an eye-witness, the evidence of a person who had known Julius Fučík closely.

Fučík was interested in everything that went on in the Soviet Union. This indefatigable young man who had a very enquiring mind could be seen everywhere: in the shafts of the Metro then under construction, joining in volunteer-work groups, and in the shops of factories. Going into the minutest details, he possessed the remarkable ability of seeing the unusual in everyday work, the selflessness of the people who were building a new state.

The land of the Soviets became Fučík's second motherland. How frequently could one hear him say: "In *our* Moscow," "in *our* Metro," "*our* achievements," "*we* have to do. . . ."

Reminiscences can be written in many different ways. Some authors are extremely pedantic in their attempt to resurrect incidental things, details which are unessential in the life of a historical figure. Ida Radvolina has approached her task in a different way. She accentuates those things which give the reader a clearer picture of the spiritual life of this Czechoslovakian Communist.

His profound love for people, his ability "to become absorbed in the very thick of cares, worries, joys and even just in the recreation which his comrades enjoy"—these are traits which the writer stresses first of all. When collecting material for a series of articles on the builders of the Moscow Metro, Fučík made a thorough study of the specific features of their work, went down into the shaft, visited their dormitory, clubhouse, etc. And the Comsomol members and builders of the Metro came to love him dearly. Indeed, it was impossible not to love this young man who was always busy and absorbed in so many things, and who was a thoughtful, responsive friend. He would visit all the stores in search of a book which some comrade needed for his work, and see to it that a sick friend took his medicine on time. Fučík never seemed to tire. He would never refuse to make a report, write one more article, give a lecture. Ida Radvolina recalls how avid Fučík felt about life, how he tried to use every free moment to supplement his store of knowledge. "A Communist has no right to miss anything."

Radvolina's book not only acquaints the reader with Fučík, but also introduces us to his articles about the Soviet Union. In his reports to his own country Fučík wrote about the new plants, about the people who had built them, about the weavers who had won fame throughout the land, and about Pasha Angelina's tractor team. To tell the truth about a country "where our tomorrow has already become yesterday" was no easy undertaking during the period of the bourgeois republic in Czechoslovakia.

In one of his last letters from the fascist prison to his relatives Julius Fučík wrote:

"I fervently wish that when I am no longer alive you will recall me with the same joy with which I always lived."

And in Ida Radvolina's book we meet the living Fučík, the man who teaches us to seek and find the joyous and the beautiful in life.



## Amusing Reminiscences

*True Stories*, by Grigori Ryklin, Moscow, 1958.

Late at night, when the next day's issue of the newspaper is almost finished but for one or two of the usual odds and ends, those who have to sit and wait till the paper is completely ready gather in one of the editorial offices. And, of course at least one experienced "old soldier" of journalism turns up there too. Somehow or other the conversation starts up by itself and slowly, with lazy arguments, skips from one topic to another until the "veteran" utters his famous opening: "I remember, way back in . . ." Then everyone settles down to listen. How many interesting and instructive stories, moving and amusing situations, laughable misunderstandings and episodes are related at such journalists' "get-togethers."

But you need not go to a newspaper office to find such interesting conversations. You can enjoy them at home, over Grigori Ryklin's *True Stories*.

This is rather an unusual kind of book. The author, who is himself a well-known columnist, carefully explains this to the reader: "This book for which I now beg your attention, comrade reader, is made up of pages from my notebooks, documents from my own files, fragments that often have nothing to do with each other, short notes, briefly described episodes which have not always been put into chronological order."

For example, Grigori Ryklin remembers those sacred stupidities which the White Guards who had fled abroad wrote in their newspapers (the stories *The Devil's Finger*, *A Thousand Pieces of Nonsense*, *The Rising Continues*); he speaks of the rather enterprising pretender to the "Russian throne," the Grand Duke Kirill who, in 1926, declared in his programme that the people had not only become "reconciled to the Soviet system as such" but had "got used to it and therefore this system should not be abandoned" but united with the monarchy.

"Nicholas and Kirill uttered all sorts of nonsense," writes Ryklin in the story *Theme for a Light Opera*. "But Kirill outdid Nicholas. He wanted to be a workers' and peasants' monarch, His Imperial Highness Comrade Romanov."

In this and other short stories the author shows how ridiculous the enemies of the

October Revolution were in their absurd forecasts and claims

The main characteristic of Grigori Ryklin's book is that it is utterly real, that none of these curious, strange stories that he tells—some of which are more like jokes—are purely figments of his imagination. All these happenings, facts and episodes, all these conversations and scenes actually took place. (The author wanted to stress this side of his book when he called it *True Stories*. However, such a title does not give an idea of its special character since "true stories" can also be those which are a product of an artist's imagination. Probably it would be more correct to call it "Uninvented Stories.")

The story *The Columnist's Mail* is of particular interest. It is not so much a story as a kind of collection of documentary material. "The columnist's mail is rather peculiar," writes Ryklin. "You can find comments on good articles and just criticism ('Comrade Columnist, you have treated the question too lightly.') as well as a new fact for an article, an amusing document, a funny request or a wrathful exposure of bureaucracy."

It should not be thought that the author writes of nothing but bureaucrats, the over-cautious, or other such negative people. He is also able to pick out the amusing traits of excellent people and he does not mind telling the reader how his "comrades-in-arms," the satirical writers, caricaturists and artists, got into awkward situations.

Grigori Ryklin pays hardly any attention to facts that, even if amusing, do not have any significance. He understands that comedy must also be instructive. And most of his stories are instructive. But the satirical writer is bound by one other obligation: his instructive stories must be funny. And unfortunately some of the stories in this book sound too didactic.

The section called *Names Dear to Us* is interesting for its pages of reminiscences of Dzerzhinsky, Ordjonikidze, Kirov, Kuibyshev, and other people who are loved in our country. Here the best fragments are to be found in the cycle of short sketches called *My Editor*, which recall the fine character of the former editor of *Izvestia*, Ivan Skvortsov-Stepanov. The well-written descriptions of the simple, everyday life of Skvortsov-Stepanov when he was editor of *Izvestia* shows us his great personal charm, high-mindedness and true comradeship, his attentive attitude to all the staff of the newspaper.



Clay Toys from Viatka

From the artist Tatiana Mavrina's album

(See the article by M. Sokolnikov)







## Clay Toys from Viatka

The painted clay toys from Viatka<sup>1</sup> have a special place in Russian folk art. Both the subjects and the motifs of the design are extremely original while their plastic expression is unique. The rich imagination of folk art is expressed in these toys with bright colours and amusing shapes.

We first hear of the toys being made at the middle of the 19th century in the village of Dymkovo, near the town of Viatka, and soon dozens of peasant families in the district were producing them. In the following decades their form and style crystallized. They took on the final lines of definite types and subjects while the composition and colours were perfected. They are remarkable for the popular humour they display and for the gay variety of colours that make them a delight to the eye.

The toys are made from ordinary potter's clay which, with the addition of a little sand and water, becomes a glutinous paste. The modelling process is not difficult. Pieces of clay are made into flat cakes and rolled into a hollow, round form. On to this basic form the auxiliary forms are stuck or modelled with

the fingers. The heads, arms, legs and different kinds of hats are added to the trunk of the doll's figure. All this is very like the modelling children do. Then the wet clay toys are baked in an ordinary peasant stove. Even if you look at the unfinished figures when they have just been taken out of the stove you are struck by the smooth roundness of the form, by the unity of the whole. In this typical Russian folk modelling there are no sharp corners. All the lines are flowing.

What is the characteristic of the pictorial side of Viatka figures? The colours are painted on a white surface. White is the basis of the harmony of these little clay toys. The painting is attractive for the bold, clear colour combinations, for the sharp contrasts which are built up into a unified harmony of colour. You might think that a painter would avoid such clashing shades, but the women artists of Dymkovo build them up into a wonderful example of folk beauty, bright and full of life.

The artists never use more than nine or ten colours. Dark-blue and yellow, ultramarine and chrome yellow, lemon, red and green, raspberry pink, fuchsia red and chrome green, chalk white and jet black—these are the main shades. Sometimes added tints are used such as orange, rose, pale-blue and brown, but these are always of much less intensity. Tiny touches of gold leaf are always added to each figure, to the hat and the collar, to the horse's ears. This touch of gold "dresses" the toys, giving them an air of splendour and richness.

How are the toys painted?

This is not a difficult process, either. Sometimes a part of the costume (jacket, hat, collar) is entirely coloured and sometimes a variegated pattern is painted on the white background. This kind of colouring is sometimes replaced by a combination of coloured lines, either straight or curved, which usually express geometric or flower ornamentation.

<sup>1</sup> Viatka, now Kirov—town that has given its name to a region in the North East of the European part of the Russian Federation.

What is particular about the world of Viatka toys, and what is the most stable form of the characters they represent?

Most frequently the toys reflect the visual impressions of the people. With much humour and sharp perception, the Dymkovo artists depict holiday promenades of the townspeople, sleigh rides, the behaviour and clothes of ladies and gentlemen in all their pretentious splendour. All these impressions of life in a provincial town seen by the sharp eyes of the people have been crystallized into typical images of ladies in crinolines, dandies, reckless soldiers on horseback, bread-and-butter misses, stout nurses taking their charges for a walk, beautiful village women with pails, and so on, all with their charming traits and mannerisms.

The round faces of the ladies with perky, turned-up noses and dabs of pink on their cheeks, the amusing clothes worn by their admirers (epaulettes and top-hats), the young ladies with sunshades and dogs—all this is a gay caricature that at the same time is a convincing expression of different social types.

Sometimes the Viatka toys show group scenes of dances, of people enjoying themselves round a table, and so on. There are also figures that illustrate the peasant's work, such as the shepherd and his flock, milking, etc.

The figures of animals and birds are perhaps the most attractive of all, for in this

example of folk art imagination and fantasy have found an astonishing affinity with a realist perception of life.

The horses—whether they have riders or not—are splendid both in form and colour. They have red, green or yellow ears, stubby legs, frothy tails, manes like zebras and are painted with splendid round spots. And the goats have enormous horns and often bell-bottomed trousers on their legs! One of the Viatka favourites is the bear. There are also deer, geese, birds, and pigs. Many of the animal toys are whistles.

Of course, Viatka toy figures are not toys in the full meaning of the word. They are not very practical for children. But in the eyes of grown-ups they are fascinating for their charm and for their popular, fairy-tale character. If you put them on a shelf, either separately or in a group, they are always a pleasure to the eye that knows how to appreciate beauty, and a wonderful example of the creative fantasy of the people.

In the hundred years or so of their existence, the Viatka toys have shown exceptional stability of subject and form. Some time ago the artist Tatiana Mavrina brought out a special picture album of these modelled toys which are wonderful examples of folk art. We have taken drawings from her album to illustrate this article.

*Mikhail SOKOLNIKOV*

## NEWS IN BRIEF

of Azerbaidjan literature from ancient times until our days. Three volumes have already appeared. They cover the literature of the pre-Revolution period.

\*

Numerous gatherings were held in Moscow, Leningrad, Tbilisi, Stalingrad, and many other cities of the Soviet Union to honour the memory of the great Iranian poet, Saadi, in connection with the 700th anniversary of the appearance of his masterpiece, *Gulistan*. This work was first translated into the Russian language from a German translation back in the 16th century. In the 19th century it was retranslated many times. Several selected stories were translated in 1922 by Evgeni Bertels. His interpretation of the text was exceptionally exact and correct.

A new edition of *Gulistan* was put out in 1957 by the State Publishing House for Fiction and Poetry. It contains the first complete poetic translation of Saadi's poetry in the Russian language, which was done by the poet Anatoli Starostin. The edition was prepared by Rustam Musa-ogly Aliyev, with Evgeni Bertels and Sergei Shervinsky as the editors.

\*

For several years now, philologists of Azerbaidjan University have been working on a five-volume history

\*

The U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences Publishing House has put out the complete translation in the Russian language of one of the masterpieces of ancient world literature, *Shiching* (Book of Songs), a collection of verse of the Chinese people, dating back to the 12th to 5th centuries before our era.

\*

The Gorky Institute of World Literature has undertaken the publication of a series of books called *Epos of the Peoples of the U.S.S.R.*, which is being prepared in co-operation with the institutes of literature of the Union republics.

The preparation of the first book, *Kurd Epic Songs*, has already been finished. It has been compiled jointly with the Institute of Literature of the Armenian Academy of Sciences.

This is the first time that the finest songs and tales of the Kurd people are presented so fully. The book contains originals of the Kurd epos, their translations into the Russian language, the melodies of these songs, recorded by the Armenian composer Komitas, and commentaries.

\*

This is the second year that Moscow's theatres review their finest productions at the end of the season. Twenty-six theatre companies took part in the Moscow Theatrical Spring Festival this year. They presented 46 plays, over half of which were the works of Soviet authors.

The jury awarded prizes to seven plays, among them *Baggage Train* by David Davurin at the Ermolova Theatre, *Women of Niskavuori* by Hella Vuolijoki at the Maly Theatre, and *A Bright May* by Leonid Zorin at the Central Theatre of the Soviet Army. Six plays were awarded honour certificates, among them *The Magic Flower* by Yen Te-yao at the Central Children's Theatre, the ballet *Joan of Arc* by Nikolai Peiko at the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theatre, and *The Hurricane* by Ts'ao Yü at the Central Transport Theatre. Twelve actors, directors and conductors were awarded personal prizes and "Moscow Theatrical Spring Festival" certificates.

\*

Lithuanian Literature Week was held in Byelorussia at the end of May.

A large group of Lithuanian writers, consisting of Antanas Venclova, Aleksandras Gudaitis-Guzevičius, Teofilis Tilvytis, and others, went to Byelorussia for the occasion. Large gatherings were held in Minsk and other towns and villages of the republic, attended by Byelorussian readers and Lithuanian men of letters.



\*

The Foreign Languages Publishing House (Moscow), will put out over 600 different books in 24 languages this year. They include the classics of Marxism-Leninism, pre-Revolution and Soviet fiction, scientific and popular-science books, booklets, and printed materials on the economic, scientific and cultural life of the Soviet Union, books for children, guide books, etc.

\*

Olga Forsh's 85th birthday anniversary and the 50th anniversary of her writing activities were celebrated last May. Olga Forsh is the author of the historical novels *Radishchev*, *Mikhailovsky Palace*, and *Clad in Stone*.

The Soviet public warmly congratulated the writer.

\*

The tenth national Pushkin conference was held last June in Leningrad at the Institute of Russian Literature (the Pushkin House) in honour of the 159th anniversary of the birth of the poet.

The conference was connected thematically with the forthcoming fourth international congress of Slavic scholars. Men of learning from Moscow, Kiev, Riga, Tallinn, Kishinyov, Krasnoyarsk and Ulan-Ude took part in it. The Bulgarian literary scholar Khristo Dudevsky was present among the guests. The reports made at the conference included one by Fyodor Priima, "How Pushkin's *Songs of the Western Slavs Were Created*, and Dmitri Blagoi's "*Song of Georgi Cherny* by Pushkin."

A large exhibition called "Pushkin in Soviet and Modern Foreign Culture" was

opened in Pushkino, formerly known as Tsarskoye Selo, where the great Russian poet had attended the lycée.

\*

On decision of the World Peace Council the 700th anniversary of the beginning of the creative activity of the Chinese playwright, Kuan Han-ching, was celebrated last June. An enlarged meeting of the learned council was held at the Institute of Sinology of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences in connection with this date.

Nikolai Fedorenko made a report on the work of the great Chinese playwright. He spoke of the profound national character of the works of Kuan Han-ching, the clear antifeudal trend of his plays, their democratic spirit and the writer's talent.

# L E T T E R S

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## TO AND FROM

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## THE EDITORS

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### PLEASE PUBLISH A "POEM OF AN INLAND CITY"

While another year of appreciative reading of your selection of Soviet novels has passed I find a feeling of dissatisfaction remains. It is the same dissatisfaction that prompted my two previous letters. The working class, that is, the industrial, factory and manufactory disciplined section of the people, is the leading factor in the drive to the new life. This is an axiom. What is it the working class sees or seeks ahead?

In the speeches of leaders, in the discussions of writers, in the formulations of tempos and targets, we seem to hear the genuine voice of the town and city dweller, innumerable are the references to the difficulties and the problems which "they" must solve and which "they" face in their efforts to control and organize and at the same time act upon in their daily city peregrinations. That is in the speeches, but where is it in the land of literature? Where is it in your pages?

Let me turn now to that outstanding story published in the summer of 1957, *Poem of an Inland Sea* by Dovzhenko. It possesses some magnificent passages of prose in both scenic description and in providing the train of thought, the atmosphere, for the part of the story about to be told. It was my first experience of reading something intended to be moulded into a film play, and after mastering its apparent spasmodic, flitting, construction I marvelled that it had been provided with such care in the choice of words and thoughts that the screen would never see. That it tried to face problems sociomoral and personal in the building of the new man and the new society made it all the more satisfactory. I now await the rest of my answers in some "poem of an inland city."

As for the rest of the year's crop—from *Young Love* to *Wind Blown*, first to last, I can only congratulate each writer for adequately achieving the task he set himself.

This year we had more groups of short stories than we have had in earlier years, and short stories I am not very partial to, preferring something I can get my teeth into and wrestle with, but quite a number have held quite firmly in my memory during the past months, for one reason or another. Among these are the lyrical outpourings of Prishvin, the story of the lonely Jewish spinster, and the nightwatchman inexorably answering the call of art. *The Notes of a Psychiatrist* I found particularly interesting with their revelations of the frailties and failures of we poor humans, not yet, if ever, to be wiped from our relationships. The final rifle shot in *The Forty-First* struck me with as big a blow as it did Lieutenant Govorukha-Otrok.

In conclusion let me say, I found it pleasant, that you printed the criticisms and comments of so many of us, your foreign readers. In general I agree with your reply to the critics given in Number 8. How can they like the magazine as it is, then make suggestions that would change its character altogether. Not so many years back, before the journalistic tripe-purveyors and monopoly paper ownership cleared the pitch, there were

a number of similar long and short story and critical article magazines in this country, so they are not so unique as some seem to think.

Cheerio, my friends, and carry on with the good work,  
Scotland

D. LESSLIE

## I DISAGREE WITH VORONIN

Sergei Voronin's novel *Limelight* in No. 10, 1957, of *Soviet Literature*, did not, I must admit, give me the pleasure I usually receive from the fiction in your magazine. I read it through a number of times until my impression was clearly defined. I am not a writer or poet, still less a literary critic. I am just a reader and therefore what I wish to say embodies only certain ideas, perhaps sometimes mistaken ones.

Voronin's novel shows the collapse of a family because the wife, Katyusha Lukonina, takes up public and political activities and is appointed to responsible positions.

It seems to me that the author has dealt badly with the problems he raises. I know very little about Soviet families and Soviet women. But comparing his solution of the question with the situation in our Vietnamese society which is now on the way to socialism, I came to the conclusion that the author had failed to find the true solution.

In the first period after the revolution, many people understood emancipation of women incorrectly. At that time the situations described by the author could actually have occurred, but even then they could not be regarded as typical—rather the contrary, in fact. Since then, thanks to the leadership given by the Communist Party and the increase in political education, the women of Viet-Nam have come to participate in all spheres of public life, and marriages have not suffered from it.

After forty years of Soviet power in a socialist society led by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, how does the author treat this situation? This undesirable phenomenon ought to have disappeared almost entirely. And at the same time, parallel with the development of a socialist society, new phenomena have arisen and developed. In my opinion, in order to be objective, the author should show the gradual disappearance of an undesirable phenomenon, and not its development. At the same time the novel should reflect the development and maturity of those new qualities in society.

Let us turn to the reasons for the change in Katyusha Lukonina, the reasons for the ruin of a family formerly united and affectionate. The story is a simple one. With the help of her husband, Malakhov, Lukonina distinguishes herself in her work and is in due course elected to the Supreme Soviet. It is natural that the Communist Party should have played an important part in Lukonina's development, since it cannot and should not ignore such an outstanding worker.

At first nobody finds anything wrong in all this—just the opposite, in fact. The gradual change in Lukonina is well shown by the author. The road she has traversed is long, but the time it took her is short. The following circumstances promote the development of undesirable traits in Lukonina:

The insufficient political education of Lukonina herself.

Bad work by the secretary of the regional Party committee, Comrade Shershnev.

The incomprehensible opposition of Malakhov, and his action in leaving his family at the end of the novel because the representative of the Party, his Party, Comrade Shershnev, does not wish to understand and support him.

It is true, we have not yet finally destroyed the remnants of capitalist society within our socialist society. But these outdated remnants can develop only under special, definite conditions and in definite times. They are quickly worn down and eliminated under pressure of the new forces born of the socialist system.

The author brought me to the conclusion that alongside objective causes connected with Lukonina herself, blame is attached to the secretary Comrade Shershnev and to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The author has shown not only the Communist



Party but also a member of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. in a bad light. This is contrary to reality, since the Communist Party is waging a constant struggle against outworn remnants of the old system. At the present time this struggle has one definite direction, alongside many others—against the cult of the individual and the consequences of this cult. That is why I feel that the author of this novel writes from a point of view not sufficiently objective.

I believe that in their work Soviet writers help to propagate the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, and assist the struggle against capitalist propaganda. For this reason I consider it my duty to tell you frankly what I think.

Viet-Nam

Nguyễn LANG

### WHAT VIEWPOINT TO TAKE?

*Soviet Literature* has forwarded your letter to the author of *Limelight* and if he wishes to reply on the pages of this magazine we shall be pleased to afford him the opportunity. For our own part, we would like meanwhile to remark that your interpretation of the basic collision in the novel was somewhat unexpected. Perhaps comment by other readers will enable us to see how widespread such an interpretation is.

In our opinion, the basic conflict does not at all lie in the idea of a happy married life being incompatible with women's public and political activity, but in the consideration that when a capable and basically sound person is too much praised, and is raised to a greater height than is right and reasonable, this may very well turn that person's head. He—or she—considers himself infallible, becomes impatient with criticism, wants to hear no contrary opinion and instead of continuing to develop, begins to deteriorate.

This is something far from new in both life and literature. Voronin's contribution to the problem is that he has shown how this ancient ill can find place in our socialist society, too.

You say that all undesirable phenomena are quickly eliminated in a socialist society. They certainly are, but not all in a moment. If you consider that class society with all its ills existed in the world for tens of thousands of years at the very least, then you will surely agree that forty-one years is not such a very long period.

What happened to Katerina Lukonina? She was a capable, efficient milkmaid, an energetic, sympathetic person, an attractive woman. She knew her job thoroughly, put her whole heart into it and well deserved the title of Hero of Socialist Labour which was accorded her. But even in this period the reader can see in her a trace of ambition and false pride. For instance, she did not want her husband to do rough work on the farm, although this work had to be done by somebody.

When the farmers elected her chairman, on the recommendation of the district Party committee, things became worse. Actually, she was not yet ready for such a responsible position; she lacked the necessary knowledge. But instead of studying, instead of seeking and heeding advice, she felt she already knew everything and could do everything much better than anybody else.

It seemed to you that in Voronin's interpretation the whole blame for Katerina's failure rests on the secretary of the regional Party committee, Comrade Shershnev, and in his person, on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. But that is certainly not so. In the first place, individual Party members, whatever position they may occupy, cannot and should not be identified with the Party as a whole. The Party as a whole, following its correct, sure path, notes and corrects the mistakes of its individual members, explains the causes of these mistakes and eliminates them. And the approach to the person who makes the mistake is determined in each individual case by the nature of the mistake and the character of the person who makes it.

Shershnev approached Lukonina superficially, and made a mistake in estimating her strength and capacities. But her husband, a real Communist with high ideals, an

honest man with every opportunity to realize Katerina's capabilities and limitations, tried to rectify this mistake and help Katerina herself to fight down her own faults as they began to gain the upper hand.

We do not wish to impose our opinion upon you, but we do, like yourself, wish to state our point of view. Perhaps if you read the novel through once more you will agree that its main problem is the struggle to develop really admirable Soviet people, both men and women.

EDITORS

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

**Alexei Surkov** was born in 1899 in the village of Serednevo, Yaroslavl region. He began to appear in print in 1924. Surkov works much in the field of revolutionary song. A number of his poems which have been set to music have become very popular, as *Chapayevskaya*, *Dark Clouds Are Gathering*, *Red Army Song*, and *Happiness Is Somewhere Here*.

Alexei Surkov is the first secretary of the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers.

**Maxim Rylsky** was born in 1895 in Kiev and is the son of an ethnographer. He attended the medical faculty and then that of history and philology at Kiev University. From 1919 to 1929 he was a teacher. He began his writing career in 1910.

Rylsky has translated into the Ukrainian language the works of Pushkin and Mickiewicz, Bualo's *Poetic Art*, the tragedies of Corneille and Racine, Voltaire's *La Vierge d'Orléans* and others.

**Taisia Zharova** was born in 1923 in the town of Kalinin. She graduated from the Kalinin State Pedagogical Institute where she specialized in literature. She is now an editor at the State Publishing House of Juvenile Literature.

Taisia Zharova is the author of a number of articles on literature published in the Moscow literary magazines *Znamya* and *Molodaya Gvardiya*.

**Leonid Sobolev** was born in 1898 in Irkutsk. His father was a retired naval officer.

As a boy he was sent to St. Petersburg where he entered a military school and then the Naval College. His training completed, he joined the Navy in 1918 and served until 1931 as a naval officer.

Sobolev's works began to appear in print in 1926. His novel *Capital Repairs*, published in 1933, won him wide recognition. The heroic deeds of Soviet sailors and marines provided him with rich material which he used in his later writings.

Leonid Sobolev is chairman of the Organizational Committee of the Writers' Union of the R.S.F.S.R. and a member of the Board of the U.S.S.R. Writers' Union.

**Alexei Kartsev** is the author of the novel *Magistral* and others.

**Victor Banykin** writes for children. He is the author of the books *Tales About Chapayev*, *Spring Floods*, *The Fomichyovs*, and others.

**Yuri Korinets** is a poet who writes for children. To his pen belong collections of verse, *333 Inhabitants* and *A Conversation That Was Overheard*.

**Mikhail Sokolnikov** was born in the town of Kineshma, in 1898. He received his education at Moscow University and Ivanovo Pedagogical Institute. An art critic, he is a member of the Artists' Union and the author of monographs about Soviet artists (Boris Ioganson, Alexander Gerasimov, and others), as well as of several works on folk art.

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EDITOR OF ENGLISH EDITION: NINA MATVEYEVA

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